

Divine Memories

Part 2

Personal accounts of sadhu disciples

as they have experienced

Pramukh Swami Maharaj in daily life

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Gujarati Text:
BAPS Sadhus

Translation:
Sadhu Paramtattvadas



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Ahmedabad, India

Divine Memories Part 2

(Personal accounts of sadhu disciples as they have experienced Pramukh Swami Maharaj in daily life)

Inspirer: HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

From 27 November to 31 December 1995, over eight million people visited the Amrut Mahotsav in Mumbai, marking the 75th birthday of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and revealing the high regard in which Pramukh Swami Maharaj is held. To commemorate the occasion publications on his life and work were written by sadhus and devotees who had experienced his saintly and diligent life at first hand.

In reality, the lives of great souls cannot be captured in a library of words. Everyone who has attempted to bring to light different perspectives of Pramukh Swami Maharaj has undoubtedly experienced this.

To truly appreciate his divine personage, eyes of a different perception are needed. Where the world of words unquestionably proves inadequate, this venture to express Swamishri on paper can at best be only a modest attempt to portray Swamishri as he is.

Each book is only a verse in the saga of a figure who has sacrificed his entire life for the good of the society he travels in.

Divine Memories Part 2 is a translation of *Jeva Me Nirakhya Re Part 2*, originally written in Gujarati. We express our heartfelt gratitude to Sadhu Paramtattvadas for translating this book.

We hope this publication will open at least a small window into the fascinating realms of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

- Swaminarayan Aksharpith

PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ

The present spiritual leader of the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), Pramukh Swami Maharaj, represents a succession of spirituality that began over 200 years ago in 1781. The year marked the birth of the founder of the Swaminarayan Sampraday, Bhagwan Swaminarayan (1781-1830 CE).

Bhagwan Swaminarayan was born in the village of Chhapaiya near Ayodhya in North India. By the age of seven, he had mastered the study of the shastras under the guidance of his father. After his parents passed away, Bhagwan Swaminarayan renounced home at the age of 11 to embark on a 7-year, 12,000 km barefoot pilgrimage across the length and breadth of India. He observed the spiritual landscape of India, before settling at the ashram of Ramanand Swami in Loj. He received initiation from him and because of his peity and unique spirituality, Ramanand Swami appointed him as his successor. Bhagwan Swaminarayan spent the next 30 years of his life in Gujarat and Kathiawad, spearheading a socio-spiritual revival. With a faithful following of 3,000 sadhus and many thousands of devotees, he established the Swaminarayan Sampraday. He introduced innovative social reforms and undertook charitable work to help the poor and needy. In line with the ancient Vedic tradition of Bhakti Sampradays he constructed six grand mandirs. His work concentrated on promoting personal morality and moulding spiritual character.

In his own lifetime, he was worshipped as God by some two million devotees. By the time he passed away at the age of 49 he had earned a reputation as a great socio-spiritual leader. The Sampraday he founded has emerged as one of the purest forms of Hinduism.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan's spiritual presence on this earth continues through a succession of God-realized spiritual masters.

The first guru in this succession was his ideal devotee, Gunatitanand Swami (1785-1867), whom he identified as the manifestation of Aksharbrahman. He in turn was followed by Bhagatji Maharaj (1829-1897).

The third spiritual successor, Shastriji Maharaj (1865-1951), established the BAPS in 1907, in consonance with the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Shastriji Maharaj emphasized the worship of Bhagwan Swaminarayan as Purushottam and Gunatitanand Swami as Aksharbrahman. He built five glorious mandirs, consecrating the murtis of Akshar and Purushottam in the central shrines and thus furthering the Vedic ideal of dual worship of God along with his ideal devotee.

The fourth spiritual master was Yogiji Maharaj (1892-1971). Through his guidance and inspiration the message of Bhagwan Swaminarayan reached across the oceans to East Africa and England. He passed away after placing the oars of the Sanstha in the hands of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in January 1971.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj was born in the village of Chansad, 12 km from Vadodara, in Gujarat on 7 December 1921. Known as Shantilal in his childhood, he was wedded to devotion from a young age. His parents, Motibhai and Diwaliben Patel, were disciples of Shastriji Maharaj and staunch adherents of the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy. Shastriji Maharaj had discerned the potential of young Shantilal from the very day he initiated him as a devotee.

At the age of 17, Shantilal received the call from guru Shastriji Maharaj to renounce. So, with the blessings of his parents, he left home. Shastriji Maharaj initiated him into the parshad-fold in November 1939 and less than two months later, at Gondal in January 1940, initiated him as a sadhu. He was renamed Sadhu Narayanswarupdas.

For 11 years, Narayanswarupdas served under the guru. During the initial years, he toured with Shastriji Maharaj and studied Sanskrit and the shastras. He excelled in studies but had

to discontinue them to serve in the mandirs. In 1943, he played an important role in the construction work of the new mandir in Atladra. From 1946 to 1950, he was given the responsibility of Kothari of the Akshar Purushottam Mandir in Sarangpur.

In a relatively short span of time, despite his young age and inexperience, Narayanswarupdas had coped admirably in fulfilling the duties entrusted to him and thus won Shastriji Maharaj's total confidence. In 1950, when he was only 28 years old, Shastriji Maharaj appointed him as President (Pramukh) of the BAPS in his own place. From then on, he began to be known as Pramukh Swami. Before Shastriji Maharaj passed away in 1951, he instructed Pramukh Swami to work under Yogiji Maharaj.

For the next 20 years, Pramukh Swami served Yogiji Maharaj with the same zeal and obedience he had served Shastriji Maharaj. The 1960s were a period of great expansion for the Sanstha.

Before Yogiji Maharaj passed away to Akshardham on 23 January 1971, he had revealed Pramukh Swami as his successor.

Since then, under Pramukh Swami Maharaj's able leadership and guidance, BAPS has grown as a highly respected worldwide socio-spiritual organization.

With the inspiration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the BAPS has made noteworthy contributions to society through its numerous social, moral, cultural, educational, medical, environmental, tribal uplift and spiritual activities.

In particular, the majestic Akshardham complexes in New Delhi and Gandhinagar have won international acclaim as centres which reflect India's ancient history and glorious culture, and inspire humanity's universal ideals.

Outside India, he has instilled fresh pride for Sanatan Dharma among all Hindus by building traditional mandirs, based on ancient Vedic architectural principles in London, Nairobi, Houston, Chicago, Toronto and Atlanta.

Also, the spectacular Cultural Festivals of India held in

London in 1985 and in New Jersey in 1991 were overwhelmingly successful in relaying the timeless messages inherent in the rich heritage and culture of India.

Swamishri himself leads an austere life, without personal gains or comforts. Possessing nothing, asking for nothing, wanting nothing, he goes around giving his all. Despite his age, he travels from tiny tribal huts to modern metropolitan cities all over the world, guiding people of all ages and backgrounds to lead a life full of virtues and spirituality. At his tender word, thousands have left addictions and walked the path of God. Swamishri has inspired, never through orders or commands, but through personal example and commitment.

His striking humility, profound wisdom and simplicity have touched many. His love for mankind and respect for all religions is weaving a fabric of cultural unity, interfaith harmony and universal peace.

The sole reason behind his unique success is a deep, uninterrupted communion with God.

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SADHU SWAYAMPRAKASHDAS

(Dr. Swami)

I first **had** Yogiji Maharaj's divine association in 1952, after which I began travelling with him during Diwali vacations. At that time I **had not** realized the importance of Pramukh Swami in the Sanstha, and **so** I never really took any special notice of him. In fact, I can't recall any singular conversation I may have had with him, or **any** particular speech or discourse he may have **delivered**. I must add, that despite this 'distance' between us, his presence **provided warmth**.

In 1965, the 100th birthday of Shastriji Maharaj was to be celebrated in Atladra. Pramukh Swami himself flew to **Delhi** to invite the then President of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan. I was fortunate to be chosen to accompany him. It was my first time on board an aeroplane and I remember being very eager to see the view from the **sky**. However, Pramukh Swami was sitting next to the window. Unable to contain my curiosity, I kept leaning across Pramukh Swami to try and catch a glimpse **of the view** below. Then suddenly Pramukh Swami got up. Instead of becoming irritated with my constant **intrusion**, he **gently** took my hand and gently **made** me **sit** in his seat, next to the window! It was the first time I experienced his ability to understand people's wishes, and how he would make a personal effort to help fulfil them. **Gradually** I began to be drawn to him.

Looking at Swamishri's daily routine we find a **daily routine** **filled** to the **last** minute. Beginning **at** 6 am **till** midnight, Swamishri is engrossed in his work, **meeting** devotees and admirers, listening to their simple or complex problems. There are countless activities which make up his day, each one, demanding and different from the others. With such a schedule, naturally one would expect that the freshness and zeal with which the day started off, would all but be gone by the evening. **But here** Swamishri is an exception. At

any moment of the day, any day of his life, look at him, you will see a picture of **energy as fresh as ever**. His alertness is just as much at night as it is in the morning. For example, even if he is in the middle of an important meeting and is interrupted by a telephone call, he still listens to the caller attentively, without even a hint of **anger**. I myself have witnessed **many** such phone calls.

Even **after a hectic day spent in** dealing with devotees' problems, when he sits down to eat or while dressing after taking a bath, or even before going to sleep, he appears totally relaxed. He can still casually share a joke with the sadhus and devotees around him. And if someone is reading to him, or explaining something, he takes a keen interest in what the speaker is saying, even though the topic may be insignificant. Never is there an expression of boredom on his face.

Ever since Swamishri began his daily regimen of walking, *yogasan* and **pranayam**, I've noticed that 90% of the time he sticks to his routine to the **last** minute! The exceptions **are** when he is travelling, or if he is ill. **Otherwise, he** maintains his routine with the utmost regularity. Considering **his** workload, this is no **ordinary achievement!**

One important detail I have noticed about Swamishri is that after any festival, when he delivers his final blessings he always gives the credit for its success to Shriji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and even to the sadhus and devotees. He never takes credit himself. Such humility can only come from the heart. His devotion and servitude to **God** and his guru are such that whenever his work or achievements are praised, he immediately surrenders the praise at Maharaj's feet, without whose grace, he says, nothing would have been possible.

Between 1971 and 1974, I spent most of my time travelling with Pramukh Swami. Once I assembled a small first-aid box to keep with us. As each bottle was identical, I wrote the name of their contents on the lid of each bottle. Then when I had finished I took the box to Swamishri for him to inspect and sanctify. As soon as he opened it

he asked, "Have you written the names only on the lids?"

"Yes Swami."

"But what if the lids are switched by mistake?"

I thought to myself, "Then there would be terrible consequences." Realizing my mistake I labelled the bottles as well within seconds of his spotting the mistake. It was the first of many occasions where I would experience, first hand, his sharp observation.

On returning from his 1977 overseas satsang tour, Swamishri came to Atladra. The assembly was packed with devotees. As it was an assembly held to welcome him, there were also many senior devotees and specially invited guests. As Swamishri was delivering his blessings a man clad in rags walked in and stood directly in front of him. He was a familiar face, a simple devotee named Mahiji. I became quite annoyed by his rude interruption in front of so many people. And yet Swamishri was not at all irritated. Without the slightest hint of annoyance, Swamishri calmly said, "So Mahiji, you have come?"

Imagine how much appreciation he must have of the simplest devotees. Even in such an important assembly and in front of so many VIPs, he is able to remain calm and greet them so affectionately.

It was Yogiji Maharaj who commanded that Pramukh Swami's 48th birthday be celebrated in Mumbai. However, Swamishri was not at all keen on it and instead he made plans to leave the preceding night. But when the sadhus and devotees came to know of this, they prevented him from leaving. I was present on that occasion. On that day, Yogiji Maharaj uttered the unforgettable words, "Today is just as important as Diwali. Shastriji Maharaj had great affection for him right from his childhood. He has appointed him as the president. Whatever Shastriji Maharaj does is divine and is for the good of all. Just look at the result. Look how the Satsang has grown. Look at our present status. Look at the sadhus he has made. Everyone should always follow his commands. By doing as he says peace is attained. He is the form of Shastriji Maharaj, there is not even the

slightest difference between them. So realize his greatness as such. Celebrate this day every year, and be sure to celebrate it on a grand scale, but don't let it become just a small get-together. Celebrate it until midnight. All will attain peace of mind..."

After the 1970 overseas tour, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj came to Bochasan. Thousands of devotees had gathered to welcome them. I was in the same car as Pramukh Swami Maharaj. As we entered the mandir a simple, unknown devotee came up to Swamishri's window. Swamishri began to talk to him so casually, that one would never get the impression that Swamishri had just returned from a grand foreign tour!

After his 64th birthday celebrations in Mahesana, Swamishri went to Mahendrabhai Sukhadiya's house. There, a poor devotee from Mediya (Kharela district) came to meet Swamishri for the first time. Swamishri spoke to him so lovingly and freely that one wouldn't think that Swamishri had just come from an assembly in which thousands had gathered to celebrate his birthday. I have witnessed his humility on innumerable occasions.

During his last days, Yogiji Maharaj would often say, "We want to initiate 700 sadhus. One hundred for each mandir. Fifty will stay in the mandir and fifty will tour the surrounding villages. Pramukh Swami will initiate these 700 sadhus." I personally heard him say this on two occasions.

On the Hindu New Year's Day in 1977, Swamishri was in New York. He phoned the Ahmedabad mandir and spoke to all the sadhus and gave them his blessings for the coming year. He even talked to a poor shepherd devotee, Raichand Rabari, and inquired about his seva in the mandir. Even in such a far-off land, Swamishri remembers even the simplest of people. Such affection and appreciation cannot be forgotten.



SADHU TYAGVALLABHDAS

In Vachanamrut Sarangpur-17, Shriji Maharaj describes how if one looks at **the** full moon from far away, it appears no larger than a dish, but then, if as one **comes nearer**, it appears larger and larger. And if one were to go right up close to the moon, one would not even be able to see the whole circumference.

So it was **when** I first came into Swamishri's contact in 1958. At first I didn't see anything extraordinary about him. Actually, I was so engulfed by Yogiji Maharaj's love that there was no scope for anyone else to enter my thoughts. Things continued in this **way until** 1970. Though I can remember a few incidents where I was inspired by Swamishri.

In 1967, Yogiji Maharaj's Amrut Mahotsav was to be celebrated in Gondal. Swamishri **was shouldering** the entire responsibility for the festival. To make matters more difficult for him, there was a severe shortage of water in Gondal. It was decided **to lay** a pipeline **between** the mandir and the nearby Ashapuri Dam. Time was short. The work went on **round** the clock. Despite **spending** the whole day supervising all the other arrangements, Swamishri would still come late at night to inspect the progress and to encourage the volunteers **working on the pipeline**.

Exactly the same type of crisis arose in 1969 on the occasion of the *murti-pratishtha* celebrations in Bhadra. Again there was **water scarcity**. A pipeline had to be laid from the mandir to the nearby Und River. Swamishri would come to the worksite in the middle of the night and engage in the work himself.

On both **the** occasions there were **several** other sadhus, like **myself**, who could have also **rendered** help. But instead we spent our time running around after Yogiji Maharaj.

When looking at the moon from a distance, it appears small. Even at that time, I didn't really comprehend Swamishri's greatness.

Everyone realizes the value of a diamond. A diamond never has to advertize itself, “Look how valuable I am.” But as men look at it more and more closely, they realize, more and more, its true worth. Swamishri’s greatness is eternal, he has always been great and always will be. As time went by, I began to notice this and to realize his status. The more time I spent with him, the closer I became to him and the more I began to discover his true form. Though even this, I put down to his grace. For otherwise, no matter how much we stay with him, without his grace we can never realize his true greatness. The Yadavs were constant companions of **Bhagwan** Krishna. But even after many years of being together, they were not able to recognize his true form. Jiva Khachar used to live in Gadhada, right next door to Shriji Maharaj, but he too remained blind to Maharaj’s divinity.

To meet such a divine personality in the first place is a blessing in itself. But it is even more perplexing to stay with them and still see divinity in all their actions, including their apparently human characteristics and habits. Since they are above *maya* and enjoy a constant link with God, everything they do is simply divine. However, as it is said, a person suffering from jaundice will see everything with a tinge of yellow, we too suffer from the misconception of being this body, and thus we see and judge him in the same light as we see ourselves.

Shriji Maharaj explains how one never sees faults in a loved one, nor in anything they do. This applies not only in normal life, but also on the spiritual path (Vachanamrut Vartal-11). Thus I consider myself extremely fortunate that Swamishri has **submerged me in** his love. Had he not, who knows where I would be today!

Until Yogiji Maharaj passed away I had never stayed in another mandir other than Mumbai. However, that was soon to change. Swamishri sent me to travel in and around the villages of Kheda district. It is true that whatever Swamishri instructs us to do, it is always for the benefit of our soul. Swamishri rarely used to come

to Mumbai, and even when he did there were so many senior sadhus, that I felt it was only proper that I keep my distance. But now, while touring the villages there would be innumerable occasions on which I would meet Swamishri and I was even able to get close to him. As I was new to the area, Swamishri himself would organize my schedule and also inform all the senior devotees that I would now be touring in their villages.

In those days he travelled far and wide and his own schedule was always very tight. So if ever he was in a nearby village, we would rush to see him. He would always make me sit next to him and ask for a report of our travels. I was very shy, and so as not to get in the way I would always sit at a distance from Swami. In turn, he would always remember me and beckon me to his side, especially during *padhramanis*. And so he continued to draw me closer to himself.

In 1975 he appointed me as the *kothari* of Atladra mandir. I **declined** the post because I felt that I was not the **right** person for the job. I didn't have the necessary decision-making skills or experience in financial affairs to be a *kothari*. But Swamishri had made up his mind and so I **had to accept**. Of course, he too must have known my weaknesses. And thus he has always put great sadhus with me, so that right until now my work **goes on** smoothly.

As *kothari*, I was now able to experience working **alongside** Swamishri. As a result of being closer to him, I slowly began to realize his divinity. Whenever Swamishri came to Atladra it was my responsibility to organize his schedule in the city and surrounding villages. Of course, I would have to go with him to all these places.

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What makes Swamishri the ideal guru? He doesn't try to help his disciples progress by mere words of encouragement, he actually practises what he preaches. He **is** a living example for us to follow.

Once Swamishri was to arrive in Atladra in the evening. I had arranged for him to have his evening meal at a devotee's **house** in the **town**. Some devotees who lived nearby urged me to bring Swamishri to their homes. So I added these extra *padhramanis* to the programme. However, it turned out that Swamishri arrived very late. As he sat down to eat, I became very worried; on one hand it was very late and on the other hand the devotees must have made all the preparations for Swamishri's visit. What was I to do now? How could I refuse them without disappointing them? By then, Swamishri had finished eating. He met the **host-devotee**, performed the *arti* and gave his blessings, after which he got up to leave. As he got to the door, he suddenly turned around and asked me if there were any more places to go? So I told him about the devotees' homes. Immediately he got ready to go. Not a word, not even the slightest expression of boredom or frustration at having to go so late at night. All through the *padhramanis* until we reached the mandir, all I could think of was how humble **Swamishri** is! He is the president of the Sanstha. He is the **liberator** of hundreds of thousands of devotees, for whom he is the guru. Despite all this he still asks a simple sadhu like me if there is anywhere **else** I wanted him to go! This is a great quality in him, and it is **the** key to running any organization smoothly.

Swamishri is very capable and intelligent **and can** run **the** Sanstha single-handed **if he so wishes**. Still, he always asks others for their opinions before **taking** a decision. He makes everyone feel that the Sanstha is theirs, and so everyone cooperates wholeheartedly.

It had been a long **tiring** day. In spite of **that** he didn't **give** the slightest hint of anger **at** those extra *padhramanis* **that he had been asked to undertake**. He went happily and pleased the devotees. **If we** have seen this with our own eyes then we would never have any difficulty in **acting** the same **way** in similar circumstances. Only when the guru gives 100% does the disciple manage to give even 15%.

While touring **the** villages **with Swamishri** I witnessed similar

incidents frequently. It **was** **normal** for him to have his lunch not earlier than 2 pm. After **lunch** he would take a short nap; and then **on** with the programme. A procession through the village, some *padhramanis*, followed by **an** assembly, **more** *padhramanis*, **then** it would be late **at** night. It was impossible to stick to the schedule **because of pressing demands from devotees**. Thus his meal times were always being pushed back. Often Swamishri would be on his way to a village; along the way he would visit a few extra villages and attend an assembly in each one before reaching the planned destination. We would have everything organized, but then he would never refuse a devotee's invitation, and so our plans **usually** went **awry**. However, he himself would always be very particular about not wasting any time himself.

Once Swamishri was to visit a village called Antoli (Vagadiya district). As he was about to take his afternoon nap, he called me and inquired about the evening programme. I told him. Then he lay down. Before we knew it, he had already woken up, taken a bath and was ready to go! It was only four o'clock. He was always punctual **with** regards to the time given in the programme. Seeing him cut back on his own rest I immediately thought of how I would always keep my rest period fixed wherever I went. And here was Swamishri not even thinking about his own body. In the village **of** Gajera, he visited 180 homes **on** a single day! He put youngsters like me to shame with his enthusiasm and effort.

Many youngsters are attracted to Swamishri, **some of whom** renounce the world and become sadhus. Swamishri teaches them to imbibe the qualities of dharma, *gnan*, *vairagya*, bhakti, *seva*, tolerance and others. As captives of his undemanding love, these youths put aside all their own personal aspirations and simply live according to his word.

Sometimes if under certain circumstances a sadhu acts rashly and a complaint is made about him, then just as parents try to defend their child's mistake, Swamishri tries to shield the sadhu. I

once happened to witness this parental instinct in **him**.

There was once a youth from Atladra village who would come **to** the mandir and **behave** as he **pleased**. He **showed** no respect **either** for the sadhus **or** for the rules of conduct in a holy place. Repeatedly he **had been** told to behave, but he paid no heed. Once, he did something which was intolerable. **As** a result **one** of the sadhus lost his temper and hit him. News of the incident spread fast, and soon the whole village was **talking about it**. It just so happened that Swamishri was in Atladra mandir at the time. In the morning, some of the senior members of the village came to meet Swamishri with the intent of having the sadhu transferred to another mandir. In the distance, the ladies were screaming abuses **s** at us, and so I took the men to one side and tried to calm them. But this only added fuel to the fire. Swamishri was having his breakfast when I informed him of the villagers' arrival. He instructed me to bring them before him after he had finished.

On meeting Swamishri they all began shouting and gesticulating **strongly**. It seemed as if they were trying to frighten **him** into **making him agree to** their demands. Then Swamishri interrupted. He sat upright and in an authoritative tone he sternly told them, "Do you mean to say that all your sons are perfect? Don't they ever make mistakes? And when they do, do you throw them out of the house? The sadhu will stay right here. Now leave." So strong was his tone that they all fell silent. None had the courage to speak against Swamishri and so they quietly got up and left. Then Swamishri called the itself sadhu and reprimanded him for being so irresponsible.

Another occasion when I saw Swamishri's love for his sadhus which comes to mind was **once again** in Atladra mandir **itself**. There was a very old sadhu called Chaturbhuj Swami, who was initiated into sadhuhood at a very young age, by **Brahmaswarup** Shastriji Maharaj. During his youth, he had worked tirelessly in the construction of Atladra mandir. After that he began touring the surrounding villages to collect funds and grains for the mandir. **As**

both his kidneys had failed Swamishri instructed that he should be taken to Mumbai for treatment. So, he entered Harkishandas Hospital for dialysis. The treatment was very expensive. When Chaturbhuj Swami came to know this, it was too much for him to bear. For one who had seen days when money was scarce and who had, with Shastriji Maharaj, struggled through infinite hardships to build the Sanstha, the thought of so much money being spent on him was too painful for him to bear. And he made known his dislike in no uncertain terms. Soon Swamishri came to Mumbai. When he went to visit Chaturbhuj Swami, the sadhu who was in his service, Anandkand Swami, explained to Swamishri that Chaturbhuj Swami didn't like seeing so much money being 'wasted' on him.

Immediately Swamishri replied, "Chaturbhuj Swami! Even if I have to spend a hundred thousand rupees for you, I won't hesitate in the slightest. Don't worry about a thing. For you, I'll travel to two more villages if I have to..." Such concern for his sadhus' welfare!

It must be said that in Swamishri's eyes, devotees are just as important.

C.P. Patel of Dharmaj, was a staunch and senior devotee. Due to old age he had become bedridden. When Swamishri came to see him, instead of complaining about his pain and difficulties, he talked about how Satsang was spreading! After listening to him, Swamishri commented, "We came here to give him hope and encouragement. Instead he has given us inspiration!" Swamishri then blessed him, he comforted him by putting his hands on C.P. Patel's body and then took leave.

Outside, two cars were waiting to take us to the mandir. The first car was to take four sadhus and Swamishri's attendant. Not knowing this, C.M. Patel (of London) went to sit in that car. I told a youth to go and inform him that if he were to use that car, then one sadhu would get left behind. So, if he didn't mind he should instead walk to the mandir which was not far away. Swamishri overheard

and immediately said, “No! Wait.” He then instructed another sadhu to get out of the car and instructed the two sadhus to walk to the mandir. He signalled to C.M. Patel to get into the car. As we got into the other car Swamishri clarified his decision by telling us that C.M. Patel had arthritis in both legs and it was very painful for him to walk. Even I knew about this, but at the time it had **escaped** my **mind**, whereas Swamishri remembered instantly! Swamishri **takes care of** both sadhus and devotees in this manner. In fact, it is only by his company that we are inspired to observe our *niyams*, to offer devotion to God, to **be tolerant** and **be** compassionate.

A baby relies upon its mother’s love. No matter how nice a cot it sleeps in, or how many nice clothes it wears, or how many expensive toys it plays with; without its mother’s love it will grow up deprived. Similarly a devotee only progresses, by imbibing the qualities of dharma, *gnan*, *vairagya* and *bhakti*, in the company of a Satpurush. Of course, one attains fruits by performing good deeds such as studying the scriptures, performing *yagnas* and giving charity, but his progress is slow and cumbersome. Whereas, in the company of the Satpurush, **the** progress is accelerated. That is why Muktanand Swami has sung:

*Pragat ne bhaji bhaji pār pāmyā ghanā,
gidh, ganika kapivrund koti,
Vrajtani nār vyabhichār bhāve tari,
Pragat upāsanā sauthi moti...*

Meaning: Many are those who have attained **moksha** by offering devotion to the manifest Satpurush. Even those, otherwise unworthy of such **liberation**, such as, eagles, monkeys (Hanumanji’s army) and dancing girls. The Gopis had only passion for **Bhagwan** Krishna, but it was enough. That is why faith and conviction in the manifest Satpurush is the highest degree one can attain.

It is clearly felt by one and all that the peace and bliss experienced upon seeing the Satpurush and staying with him is unique. This explains why, wherever Swamishri goes, huge

crowds flock to him for **darshan**. Just as **moths** swarm around a candle at night, devotees teem around the glow of Swamishri's divinity. But there are consequences which result from such close attention by so many people.

Our Sanstha is expanding **by** leaps and bounds, day by day new mandirs are being **built**, the number of sadhus and devotees is rising, Satsang-related activities and social welfare programmes are also on the increase. However, all of these require Swamishri's invaluable guidance, thus **planning** great constraints on his time. Also, we mustn't forget that he isn't getting any younger, the years are beginning to take their toll on his body. He, of course, doesn't care for his health, but naturally, when the strain becomes too much he simply cannot manage; his body no longer complies with his mind. Thus his daily routine is now organized so that he is able to get sufficient rest.

Why I am writing this? Because the time has come for us to realize that, unlike the old days, the opportunity of Swamishri's darshan, company and personal *seva* is becoming scarce. It brings to mind the words of an old devotee, Manibhai (of Salad) who once proclaimed, "The day will come when we will have to queue up to meet Pramukh Swami and when we'll only be able to see him from one kilometre away!" In short, we cannot have Swamishri's darshan as frequently as before. Of course, we preach words of understanding and knowledge, "With his *agna* comes his *murti* (form)," meaning that those who follow his commands can be sure that Swamishri is always with them. If Swamishri used to give his devotees bliss by his darshan and *seva*, then today he fulfils them in spirit. In fact, one universal experience is that of the overwhelming joy felt by seeing him for even a split-second, seeing him smile, or even just waving his hand.

This is the secret behind his alluring charm. Why aspirants will wait for hours in conditions of suffocating heat and freezing cold, watching from a neighbour's window, or even the roof of a house,

just for a mere glimpse of him walk from one house to another, or just get into a car. Precious are these few seconds, obtained only after hours of anticipation.

The rising sun heralds a new day. The atmosphere is already charged with divinity. Swamishri comes out to do his puja; today even this ritual of so many years has now become just like an organized assembly. There are those who set out from their homes in the early hours just to get a seat close to the stage. Well before Swamishri comes out a crowd **would have** already **collected**. Sadhus, youths and children, all take turn to sing kirtans.

Similar scenes **like the one described** above also take place when Swamishri takes his daily walk. As Swamishri spends the whole day sitting down, doctors advised Swamishri to walk **daily** for 25-30 minutes, **after his heart attack in 1983**. Only rarely, due to illness or an important meeting, will Swamishri miss his walk, regardless of where he is. Again, devotees arrive early to get a good seat. Seeing him walk, his swift pace, eyes fixed to the ground, arms gently swaying to and fro, is a soothing, refreshing experience. Here too, children and youths sing, give speeches and recite verses or paragraphs from the scriptures which they have memorized especially to present in the presence of Swamishri. Sometimes they relate incidents from Swamishri's life and there are even a few who tell jokes! Though Swamishri is walking, his attention is focused on the speaker. Encouraging them with a faint smile, a wave of the hand when they stumble, and even a small correction if they make **any** mistake. However, the clock ticks on swiftly as Swamishri walks, enraptured, no one notices the 30 minutes elapse.

Another occasion when he gives darshan is when he eats. Various programmes are performed, such as, reading a book, singing verses, recounting comical incidents or just narrating incidents from the old days. Occasionally, Swamishri will slip in a small joke or comment, sending everyone into **peals** of laughter. Despite the programmes, due to his divine form and the bliss

emanating from him, he is always the centre of attraction. For those engrossed in him, the rest of the world simply fades away.

Even his eating habits are extraordinary. **This is the one thing that all of us care for while eating**, unless we are ill or under tension. **Otherwise**, we look forward to our meals. Many times I've sat before Swamishri while he eats, and each time I've noticed that although his dish is filled with many delicious items (the same that are offered to Shri Harikrishna Maharaj), most of them he will touch only with his eyes not his hands. For Swamishri is not interested in what he eats. Sometimes, his attendant will put something in the bowl, he eats it, but only a little bit so as not to disappoint the sadhu. In fact he **spends** the time mostly **in** eating *khakhra* and *papad*. As we've seen before, his attention is focused on the person speaking in front of him. If there is no reporting or any other programme, he tells the sadhu to read something, usually a new publication by our Sanstha, or the *Swaminarayan Prakash*. He listens so attentively that he is able to point out mistakes in the literature, printing or facts such as dates, places and names. He may **at times** even voice his own opinion about the topic.

Every morning he has to drink milk (warmed with added herbs) to take his medicine. From his expression, it is obvious that he doesn't enjoy this! In fact, he gives a literal meaning to the term 'drink-up' - he finishes it in one gulp! Most people savour their **drink** by taking small sips, but not Swamishri.

It is not easy for one to comprehend the significance of his dislike for tasty food and drinks. But after 33 years as a sadhu, and according to Shriji Maharaj's commands, having constantly tried to conquer the sense of taste myself, without I must add, much success, I can truly appreciate how great a feat this really is. Yet Swamishri does it so naturally!

One other feature of Swamishri which has touched me is how his life is so open. There are many who, living in the glare of the public eye, always try to break away to some remote hideout for

some time for themselves, or to spend time with their family and close friends. It is a fact that man likes privacy. Yet Swamishri has never had any such time to himself. Never has he kept a private room, out of bounds for everyone else. In fact, even the room he sleeps in he shares with his two attendant sadhus. In the old days, even youths used to spend the night in the same room! Everything he does, bathing, getting dressed, eating and sleeping is public.

Sadhus are always eager to get closer to Swamishri, because his every gesture is redemptive. They will savour even the smallest gesture and treasure it forever. If Swamishri is at an important meeting, they will wait outside the door, till it is over and then surround him like small children. They are content even to stand at a distance and simply watch him write letters or meet devotees.

When are they separated? At night. After watching him have his contact lenses removed and the light switched off, the sadhus offer the day's final prostrations to him. Then, they quietly leave him for those few dark hours before the rising sun heralds the beginning of another day.

In this way Swamishri has given his life to others. In his heart there is only a burning desire to do good to all. Yet he bears no aspirations for praise or position, for compliments or comforts. It is with but one wish, that he has come down onto this earth, to please one and all, and to liberate us.

Watching him, thinking about him, I am overwhelmed in the ocean of his love.

The qualities inherent in him are infinite, and to tell you the truth, it is beyond my capacity to describe them. What once appeared as no more than a small dish today after coming closer the same the dish appears so vast that it is beyond the limits of my imagination. So, who am I to describe Swamishri?



SADHU SIDDHESHWARDAS

I have seen Swamishri in different places, darying situations and moods. There are, however, three to four incidents which I can vividly see before my eyes, even today. With the utmost respect for this great, divine man, I offer these memories...

As an elder, Swamishri looks after his siblings with such love; never asking for anything in return, he is totally without expectations. He personally takes care of our every need. At the same time bathing us in a never ending stream of love.

During the Amrut Mahotsav of Yogiji Maharaj I was fortunate enough to be entrusted with various responsibilities. This meant a lot of rushing around from one place to another. Often we would end up working late into the night. On such occasions Swamishri would always instruct Devcharan Swami, “Keep some food outside for Ramcharan and Siddheshwar. If they come back late then make sure you call them, and make sure they eat.” One night, we had gone to Rajkot to buy some cloth, we returned at 1:30 am. Waiting for us on the steps were Harshad Chavda and Devcharan Swami. They told us, “Pramukh Swami told us to wait for you and serve food to you when you return, so come on!”

ddd

In 1966, Yogiji Maharaj was in Unza. At that time in Mumbai, Dadubhai and his followers had started to stir up trouble in the mandir. Four of us, Rasikbhai (the Sanstha’s secretary), Rameshbhai Dalal, another sadhu and myself, immediately set off for Unzha in a taxi. We reached there at about 1:30 am. Waking up Pramukh Swami, we informed him of the events. Even after being roused from his sleep in the middle of the night, he still listened attentively to our briefing. Such a crisis would, for the president of any large organization, be extremely disturbing. But not Swamishri, he remained totally calm and composed. It was essential that a

decision be made on the spot. However, despite the fact that he was president, before making any decision or giving any instructions, he first went and woke up Yogiji Maharaj and consulted him as to what action he thought should be taken. It was very characteristic of Swamishri, as he never took a step without first asking Yogiji Maharaj. He quietly explained the situation to Yogiji Maharaj, trying not to disturb him more than he had to.

There and then, Yogiji Maharaj wrote a letter (at 1:30 in the morning). With Swamishri and the letter, we immediately left for Ahmedabad. There we went to the residence of Khengarjibhai and summoned Dadubhai for a meeting. During which Swamishri showed great patience in trying to convince him that it was best for him to stop all his improper activities. He realized that Swamishri knew that he was at the centre of the controversy, and yet in spite of this, he refused to admit to being any part of it. Instead of using his authority, Swamishri humbly tried to persuade, "Follow Yogiji Maharaj's wish. That will be best for all of us. Why deceive him?"

After repeated attempts Swamishri finally changed his tone. Now with all his power he said, "Until now Yogiji Maharaj has tolerated all your misdeeds. So it's time you realized what the consequences of this will be and follow his wish instead. This is not at all proper." This went on for ten minutes in which Swamishri was so blunt that for the time being, Dadubhai actually admitted to his mistake and accepted the blame for all the trouble.

I can never forget how Swamishri always did everything according to Yogiji Maharaj's wishes and never once acted independently, even though he had the power to do so.

ddd

The contract for the construction of the Gadhada mandir had been given to a Sompura. However the contractor always made the measurements, etc., to balance the costs in his favour. Swamishri noticed this and informed the Sompura, who refused to recognize the obvious cheating. So it was decided to appoint

a neutral judge who would decide which side was cheating. Mohanbhai Rathod (Palitana) of Mumbai was appointed as the judge. Mohanbhai, Harmanbhai and Harshadbhai Dave, all stayed in Gadhada to oversee the job. Swamishri also stayed. Every morning Mohanbhai would begin surveying the land and taking measurements. Despite being busy with his own work, Swamishri took extra care to make sure that tea and water were served to them at regular intervals. At meals times he would personally **make** them **sit** down and feed them. Only after which he would himself eat. This care and attention touched Mohanbhai deeply. He was a scholar of the Ramayana and over the years he had been to many great receptions and met many kings and great sadhus. But what he saw in Swamishri was unlike anything he had ever seen before. It inspired him to comment, “Pramukh Swami - Narayan Swami - really is the *swarup* (form) of Narayan.” In the coming years he would repeat this in speeches and conversations. He even told Yogiji Maharaj!

ddd

Swamishri never forgets to **remind** us **of** our work. He likes a job to be done thoughtfully and efficiently. He often scolds us if we make a mistake, taking us to task for our carelessness but never our ability. The only reason why he does this is so that we are more careful in the future. It must be said that even after we have committed a mistake, he may rebuke us, but his love for us never diminishes in the slightest. Once, due to a grave mistake, I became totally dejected. What was in my eyes, a dreadful blunder, was washed away by just a few words from Swamishri, “Why worry about it now?” He even guided me on what to do next. Since that day, he has never mentioned it again, and his love and affection, if anything, has increased a thousandfold.

ddd

Finally, I was injured in a car accident near Nadiad. The local doctors failed to realize the seriousness of the injury. But it later

became all too apparent. After inspecting it in Mumbai, Dr. Kiran Doshi and Dr. Harshad Bhatt recommended that I go to America to undergo surgery. However, I was extremely hesitant to ask Swamishri. After many hours of summoning up the courage I finally asked him. He simply replied, "If the doctor says so, then you must go!"

That's all there was to it. Later, when Dr. Harshad Bhatt phoned Swamishri, he himself dictated a whole list of instructions regarding the arrangements for male nurses, etc. He then repeated these same instructions to Dr. K.C. Patel. By Swami's grace, I had the operation and have since recovered.

When I stop to think about Swamishri's compassion, my heart overflows, and I realize the greatness of his mercy upon our souls.



SADHU HARIBHUSHANDAS

It was Yogiji Maharaj's last Diwali with us. After the festival I travelled in the surrounding villages to distribute the Annakut *prasad* with Balmukund Swami. One month later we returned to Gondal, where we were greeted by some devotees from Manavadar. They invited us to their village.

It just so happened, that a **few years** earlier, Dadubhai and Babubhai Nathabhai Patel had been excommunicated from the Sanstha **for violating** the Sanstha's code of conduct and **for** other indecent activities. However, there were some devotees in Manavadar who still kept in contact with them, some even helping them continue **with** their activities. Thus it had been decided that none of our sadhus should go there as long as these devotees continued to support Dadubhai. Of course, this was **a** severe setback for those staunch devotees who lived there. It was they who had come to invite us to Manavadar, but how could we say yes or no? So Balmukund Swami told me, "Go and ask Yogi Bapa, if he gives the go-ahead we'll go." Yogiji Maharaj was sitting in the assembly, a devotee was giving **speaking**. Approaching Yogiji Maharaj, I explained the situation and asked him if we should go. He told me, "Ask Pramukh Swami. Whatever he says, you do. You'll experience peace if you do that!" Not fully understanding what Yogiji Maharaj meant about 'experiencing peace' I went to Pramukh Swami. Swamishri **had** just been to the cowshed for an inspection. **I** bowed at his feet, Swamishri asked, "Do you want something?"

"Yes," I replied, and I told him about the devotees' request.

"Ask Yogi Bapa," he said at once.

"He told me to ask you."

"Well then," he said thoughtfully, "tell Balmukund Swami that there is no need to go **now**."

Through this incident Yogiji Maharaj seemed to hint to me that

“after I am gone, Pramukh Swami will be in my place...whatever you do, always ask Pramukh Swami first.”

ddd

In 1966, Yogiji Maharaj, Swamishri and a group of sadhus came to Mumbai. Gulzarilal Nanda and Chandrabhan Sharma (of Pavai) were in an important meeting with Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami. In between, I took in some fruit and milk as refreshments. In my haste, I spilled some milk into one of the saucers. Swamishri was watching me. He gave me such a glare that I knew he wasn't impressed. After they had left, Swamishri called me to one side. Softly he said, “Haribhushan, remember one thing, never fill a glass of milk or water up to the brim. It shouldn't spill over into the saucer. Pour a little less into the glass so that not even a drop overflows.”

This small lesson in etiquette has been helpful to me on many occasions.

ddd

In 1982, I was staying in Kolkata **mandir**. A car purchased from Delhi had just arrived. So we, the sadhus, **thought of** going to Bochasan to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Sanstha **in** our new car. **We** wrote to Swamishri to ask if it was all right if we came. His reply was inspiring for us all. So that it can serve as a source of inspiration to everyone, I would like to share it with you:

Jai Swaminarayan and blessings from Shastri Narayanswarupdas.

We have received your letter regarding your planned trip to Bochasan by car. Until now you have all been very patient, so please wait a little longer. We will definitely meet in Aso (October); be content to wait until then.

You must have received my previous letter regarding the length of your stay in Kolkata. Here, I have done darshan of Thakorji on your behalf. Keep up with your regular discourses, services and devotion to Thakorji. Do not allow yourselves to get bored or else you won't be able to do your work properly. And if you do become slightly

frustrated, then remember what Swami has said, “Our soul enjoys doing satsang, but our mind, body and senses despise it...” Thus we often become lazy in satsang. Laziness and idleness are two terrible extremes when worshipping God, be aware of them at all times.

How does laziness creep into our lives? First we think, “I’ll do it afterwards,” then it becomes, “I’ll do it later,” and then we think, “I’ll do it tomorrow.” It goes on and on, **and** soon we become lazy in our duties and bhakti too. However, there is that Vachanamrut about the shrewd business**ss**man’s accounts. In Kolkata there are a lot of shrewd businessmen. Notice how they keep their accounts up-to-date, they never miss a day, you’ll find them always checking how much money is coming in and how much money is going out. As a result, today they have hundreds of thousands of rupees. Still, they never become lazy in this. So now they are very well off. In the same way we too should keep a daily check of our routine. Waking up late is due to laziness, doing our puja late is due to laziness, singing chestha only when we feel like it is also due to laziness. These are the bad habits we form when we become lazy. Nishkulanand Swami has written, “Everything was lost due to laziness...”

So just as a businessman who neglects his accounts soon runs into debt, the same will become of us. You are all still young, if you allow laziness to creep in now, then you will never be able to do anything. So now is the time to be aware of this and to make a wholehearted effort in all your work. God has given us this great chance. As the saying goes:

“Kal kartā āj ane āj kartā ab, mul vinānu dokadu,
dade ga kab, ne karegā kab.”

(Not tomorrow, do it today, and not today do it now. For the body has no roots, it may fall at any time, then what will you do?)

Therefore “Kon jāne kem thayu, āvyu anchintavyu sukh...” (Who knows how this unimaginable happiness has come...)

It is up to you to safeguard that bliss. But remember, if laziness

creeps in, all will be lost. So don't be lazy in any of your activities. Not tomorrow, do it today. Be regular in your puja, bhajan, seva, katha and reading. Shriji Maharaj tells us, "Any activity related to dharma should be done immediately." Swami also says, "It doesn't matter if you don't finish a million other tasks. But be sure to finish the tasks which will give you *moksha*."

Just see how much Shriji Maharaj and Gunatitanand Swami stress the importance of this. Now, if we spend our time idling around then think how ignorant we must be? Shastriji Maharaj and Bapa (Yogiji Maharaj) were never lazy. Your bodies will tell you to sleep all day, but ask yourselves "What have I come here to do and what am I doing?" And then do what you have come here to do. You are all sadhus now, remember your goals. You haven't come here to eat, drink and sleep, nor have you come here to roam everywhere or to go around the world. You have come to see God and his sadhus, to do bhajan. So be careful that you don't forget those on one side, don't let there be any weakness in those. You may be far away, but by following the commands you are near. So put aside any personal aspirations and strive to follow Maharaj's wishes. Behave in a respectable manner, one which befits us as sadhus, for our only value *lies in* our saintliness. Take care not to lose it. So all of you be content. Please forgive me for refusing you *permission* to come here.

Keep unity in everything you do.

Ignorance is when we don't recognize God and his sadhu in their true form and instead, perceive them to be normal beings like ourselves. Remember, we have come *in contact* of Bapa and Shastriji Maharaj, only through them will we attain *liberatio*. Apart from this, there is nothing else of any value in this world, nor will you find peace anywhere else. So come what may, joy or pain, honour or insult, fight your mind if you must, but do only as he says. And do bhajan with the firm conviction that we want to please him. It is written in the Vachanamrut, "One who has

bhakti in his heart, he only ever thinks that I'll only do whatever God and his sadhu tell me to do." But he has no doubts about this. The 500 paramhansas lived such lives, and they attained God's bliss. We too, want to stand alongside them and also enjoy that bliss. So be content and do bhajan.

With blessings, Jai Swaminarayan.



SADHU YAGNESHWARDAS

After he returned from the 1970 overseas tour, people everywhere wanted to honour Yogiji Maharaj. The devotees of Bhavnagar were so eager that a devotee, Masum Ali Sheth, sent four Ambassador cars to Gadhada to bring Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and other sadhus to Bhavnagar. It was decided that they would go in the cars to Valbhipur, where Yogiji Maharaj was to consecrate the *murtis* in the new mandir and proceed to Bhavnagar.

In those days Swamishri himself would make all the arrangements regarding who would sit in which car. At the time I was Mahant Swami's attendant, so I asked Swamishri which car Mahant Swami was to occupy.

Swamishri was holding a long list with the names of all the senior sadhus and senior devotees. After referring it he said, "I'm afraid that all the cars are full. So, Mahant Swami will come with us. You go directly from here to Bhavnagar by bus, and we'll meet you there. If you think you won't reach there by dinner time then give Mahant Swami's *pattar* to Dev (Devcharan Swami) and keep his *potlu* with you..."

So I got ready to go by bus to Bhavnagar. Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the others had already left for Valbhipur when we went to the bus stand. Just then it began to rain heavily. At first it was just a shower, but within the hour the River Ghela was gushing past in fearful rage. We stood watching as its level slowly crept up as indicated by the bridge. Soon the bridge disappeared under water and with it went any hope of our reaching Bhavnagar that day. I began to worry for I had Mahant Swami's *potlu*, which contained his clothes and puja material. But there was no way I could get them to him. I imagined the next morning: Mahant Swami waking up to find he had no clothes and

no puja **items**. He'd have to fast!

Because of the rain we were stranded in Gadhada for three days! In Bhavnagar, Mahant Swami was given a spare pair of clothes, and Yogi Bapa had told him that it would be all right for him to use Shrihari Swami's puja, so there was no need for him to fast. When we arrived four days later, Yogiji Maharaj **was being taken** out in a procession to the Town Hall for a grand assembly. We went there.

Yogiji Maharaj entered the hall, Pramukh Swami was just behind. As he was taking off his shoes I walked up to him and bowed **to** his feet. Seeing me he instantly said, "Forgive me, we wanted to take you along in the car but there just wasn't any space. I realize you've had to go through a lot of trouble to get here, so please, forgive me."

I was only eighteen years old. He was the leader, the president of the Sanstha. And it wasn't as if it were his fault either; the cars were full, what could he have done? Still he humbly asked a young sadhu like me for forgiveness. Surely this is the **height** of humility!

ddd

In 1971, Yogiji Maharaj was in Gondal. Unnad Bapu, *mahant* of the famous pilgrim place of Paliyad in Saurashtra, was the chief guest in the assembly. He had great affection for Yogiji Maharaj and our Sanstha. In his speech he said, "From now on we should refer to Yogiji Maharaj as Jagadguru - Guru of the whole world."

One year later, Unnad Bapu passed away. His son and successor, Amra Bapu expressed his wish that Swamishri himself come to Prabhas Shetra in Somnath to scatter his father's ashes into the sea. On 16 June 1972, Swamishri went from Mangrol to Veravadar and then to Somnath. It was 9:45 am when he arrived at the seashore. Having changed his clothes, Swamishri and Amra Bapu took the dish holding the ashes and walked into the water. Slowly, they went in deeper **till** the water **reached** their thighs. I noticed that Swamishri seemed to **have** **stumbled** on something.

But he immediately regained his balance and **kept** on walking as if **nothing has happened**. They **waded till** the water was waist deep, then after performing the rituals, Swamishri **let** the ashes into the ocean. After having the ritual bath they came out. From here it was straight onto a special memorial assembly. Haka Babu gave a short eulogy in memory of Unnad Babu and then Swamishri gave his blessings. Everyone had lunch there.

Swamishri had especially adjusted his schedule to be present here, and so after lunch he immediately left for Veravadar where he was to stay at a place called Sindhivadi. In those days there were no special arrangements made for Swamishri's **stay**. He would **put up** with **the** sadhus and devotees. In the evening, he went back to his daily routine of going to an evening **satsang** assembly followed by a few *padhramanis*, etc. The next afternoon (approximately 28 hours after the previous day's ceremony) the sadhus were massaging Swamishri's legs before he took his afternoon nap. I was massaging **the sole of** his right foot, **while** Swamishri was talking with us. It was dark. I noticed that as my hand touched a certain spot on his foot he would gently pull it away. But he wouldn't say anything so I continued to press his feet. This **happened** three to four times, so finally, I decided to have a look. I took a torch and shone it under the cover. What I saw sent shivers down my spine. The terrible sight before my eyes made me realize the extent to which Swamishri could **endure** pain.

On the sole of his right foot was a deep cut. A straight gash about three to four inches long! Immediately the sight of his stumbling in the water flashed before my eyes. At that very moment he must have stepped on some sharp object and cut his foot. **The** sea water must have **made matters worse by stinging him terribly**, and yet he stayed in the water for another 20 to 25 minutes. All the while Swamishri kept his composure, he silently tolerated the pain so as not to upset the proceedings. But it didn't end there. Even after coming out of the water, he didn't mention a word about it to

anyone! One would expect him to say something when I pressed it, but even then, not even a quiet cry of discomfort **escaped** his lips!

Really Swami, you are amazing! No-one else can tolerate pain the way you **did**.

ddd

5 June 1973. This was a day I will never forget. After Swamishri had consecrated the *murtis* in Untwada mandir, he returned to his **quarters** for lunch. We all sat to eat with him, and during the meal he gave me two ladoos, and just as I was about to get up, I found a third lying in my **pattar**! Only later would I realize the value of those ladoos!

At 4:30 pm we left Untwada to go to Junagadh. In our car, a Fargo, along with Swamishri was Dr. Swami, Anupam Bhagat (presently Bhagwatpriya Swami), Devcharan Swami, Pragat Bhagat, A.P. Patel, two other devotees and myself. The route would take us through the Gir Jungle. Shortly after entering the jungle, we came to a junction by a small dam. None of us **was** sure which way to go and so the driver, Dajibhai, stopped the car and asked Swamishri, “Which road shall we take?”

“Make a left turn,” replied Swami.

I don’t know whether or not Dajibhai heard Swamishri correctly, but he drove straight on. No-one said anything. As we drove on into the night we could see the jungle was becoming more and more dense. Strangely, there wasn’t a road sign, giving directions, anywhere. We were all becoming restless. It was now pitch black outside and we hadn’t seen a car or any people for a long time. The road was becoming worse and the fact that none of us knew where we were going was not comforting. But Dajibhai just drove on at full speed.

Suddenly someone shouted, “Lion! Lion!” We looked out the window and we could see a lion running alongside the car. After making sure all the windows were closed, Dajibhai slowed down the car so that we could have a proper look. A young, sturdy lion

stood proudly in front of our car. Then it moved to the right and came and stood by Swamishri's door. There was silence, except for the sound of the frantic beating of our hearts. The lion stepped up and pressed its face to the window. We all held our breath. To our shock and horror, Swamishri rolled down his window! Then Swamishri and the lion just looked at each other. A whole minute must have elapsed, after which the lion simply turned around and disappeared into the overgrowth! The excitement coupled with fear of seeing a lion at such close quarters was short lived, as the real fear of not knowing where we were soon returned. We decided to stop the first person or vehicle we met and ask for directions. Again Dajibhai was at the wheel. But the road was deserted. Although on two or three occasions we could make out small distant flames among the trees.

We continued straight ahead. After about half an hour we finally came to a junction. There was a board which read 'Visavadar - ...km.' Again Dajibhai stopped the car and asked Swamishri "What now?"

Swamishri asked, "How much petrol is left in the tank?"

Pragat Bhagat used to keep two plastic containers filled with petrol in case of an emergency. So he said, "There's enough." "Then turn the car around." We emptied a can into the tank and then went back down the turning from which we had just come.

We were to have reached Junagadh at eight o'clock, but it was already past eight here on the road. But in the car the mood had lightened somewhat, some of us sang kirtans and Swamishri would occasionally tell us an incident from Yogiji Maharaj's time. Finally we came to the small dam where we had originally taken the wrong turn. Though this time we took the turning which Swamishri had suggested in the beginning.

After a while the road suddenly disappeared. We simply couldn't see it! It was the monsoon season and the road was covered with dry leaves, broken branches and other rubbish washed up by the river. Now we went forward slowly, trying to stick to what we thought

was the road. Sometimes we would get stuck in mud, at other times the whole car would slip and slide. Dajibhai was sweating now, **so** he took off his **vest**. It wasn't easy to control the car in such terrible conditions. Swamishri too, was on the edge of his seat. He was constantly on the look out for obstacles in the way, both his hands were supporting Dajibhai in the drivers' seat. Suddenly the car slipped violently towards a ditch, Swamishri said "Throw it into third..." Daji reacted like a bullet and he managed to regain control.

Our next challenge came in the form of a ditch. The river had filled it. Devcharan Swami and Pragat Bhagat got out of the car and went to measure how deep **the ditch** was. As they went in they learnt that it was in fact, quite shallow and so they signalled the car to come through. We would come across quite a few ditches, like this one, that fateful night.

At about 9:30 pm we came to a forest rangers' camp. We parked the car in the compound. Swamishri got out to go to the bathroom, when he returned we offered him some water **to drink**, but he refused. He then asked a ranger for directions. It so happened that the ranger also wanted to go to Junagadh. As we needed a guide we offered to take him with us. Though there wasn't any space, we squeezed him in the front next to Swamishri.

It proved to be a wise decision to take him along, for at night, all the railroad crossings in the jungle are closed. Because of the ranger, they opened them for us.

By now everyone was famished. Devcharan Swami began to look around in the car, but found nothing. "It's a miracle that there's nothing in the car, there's usually always some peanuts lying around," he exclaimed.

Finally, at about 1:30 am we seemed to emerge from the jungle. Just as we thought it was all over, the wheels of the car got stuck in a huge pothole! The more Dajibhai pushed the accelerator the more the wheels would just spin and throw up mud. So we all got out to push the car. Swamishri also tried to get out of the car,

but we forced him to stay seated. We rolled up our *dhotiyas* and while Dajibhai kept pressing the accelerator, we would lift the car and push. Swamishri would stick his head out of the window and give us a few instructions, and then he would pop his head out of the opposite window and advise them on what to do. Mud and water were **splashed** everywhere. Finally, after half an hour, the last straw, the petrol ran out! We were dumbfounded.

Swamishri said, “Ask him,” pointing to the ranger. He said, “There’s a place called Sattadar about seven kilometres from here, I’ve seen the way. We’ll be able to get petrol from there.”

So four sadhus, Dajibhai and the ranger set off to get some petrol. Swamishri, Dr. Swami and the devotees stayed behind and tried to get some rest in the car. It was so muddy that we had to take off our slippers as they kept getting stuck. We walked on with only one torch amongst us. Suddenly a huge snake appeared in front of Devcharan Swami. Anupam Bhagat shouted, “Dev! Snake!” Devcharan Swami managed to jump over it **in the nick of time**, and the snake slithered on its way.

Finally we reached Sattadar. We woke up a farmer who took us in his tractor to the nearby dam. With great difficulty, Devcharan Swami managed to wake up the official. Soon our cans were filled and we returned to Sattadar. We also took a strong cable to pull the car out of the pothole. As the car was already full, two of us stayed behind at the farmer’s house, while the rest took the tractor to the spot where the car **got** stuck.

Having washed off the mud, I sat down. My stomach rumbled and I remembered the three ladoos Swamishri had given me during lunch. It was as if he were preparing me for this ordeal!

Forty-five minutes later they finally arrived. From there we went to Visavadar, filled up the tank. At 4:30 am, we drove into Junagadh, **eight** hours late! Then after taking a bath and doing our puja we began the next day’s routine, as if nothing had happened.

Such difficulties occurred frequently during Swamishri’s travels

in those days. If it meant staying awake all night, he was ready; no matter what obstacles came in the way, he overcame them; no matter how bad the pain, he tolerated it just to please his devotees.

ddd

On Sunday June 19 1977, Swamishri was to attend a general assembly at the Wembley Conference Centre in London. The air conditioning unit was blowing cold **blasts of** air. The hall was overcrowded and so most of the audience probably never even noticed, but on the huge stage there were only ten to twelve people. In those freezing conditions Swamishri sat for five hours, from 4 to 9 pm. After the programme, we stepped outside only to find that it was even colder than inside!

From there we went to the house of Ishwarbhai Master. Swamishri and the sadhus **were to have dinner** in the small kitchen, **and** the seventy to eighty devotees would have a buffet dinner outside in the cold! As Swamishri entered the kitchen he saw three to four youths looking in through the window. They shouted, “Bapa, *prasad*!” Swamishri looked at Bhaktikishore Swami who picked up a plate of *pistapak*. Swamishri began looking up and down, he was wondering how to give it to them. The window was stuck. Bhaktikishore Swami climbed onto the platform and tried **to open it** with all his might, but it was stuck fast. Swamishri spotted a small window at the top. He was just able to reach it by standing on tiptoe. Through this window he began handing out *prasad* to the youths. The other devotees saw this and came running. The sadhus brought two small wooden stands, so that Swamishri could stand **with ease**. Soon the *pistapak* ran out, but seeing a pile of *rotlas* Swamishri asked for them. Cutting each one into quarters, Swamishri began handing them out. He stood there until each and every devotee had received *prasad*, it must have taken ten to twelve minutes in all.

Then Swamishri washed his hands and sat down to eat. His seat was next to the sink. As the kitchen was small, and there

were so many items, there wasn't even space to walk around. On Swamishri's right was Mahant Swami and on his left was Ishwarcharan Swami. I went to the sink and began filling glasses of water for everyone. I had filled two glasses and then it happened. A glass toppled over and **the water** spilled all over Swamishri. He was soaked. I thought that he must have just warmed up after **freezing for** five hours in the hall and now he was drenched in cold water. Though he **was calm as ever**, I was totally dejected.

Ishwarcharan Swami reacted swiftly and removed Swamishri's wet *gataryu* and put his own around **him**. Then **the wet cloth** was taken to another room where it was dried with the use of an iron. After Swamishri had finished eating he went and sat in the next room. We gave him his dry *gataryu* and he took it without a word, as if nothing had happened. It's amazing how he kept calm when he had every right to be **annoyed**.

ddd

In 1978, Swamishri was touring in the villages around South Gujarat - Selvas, Vapi, Atul. He had many places to go and not enough time. To make matters worse his schedule was poorly organized and so his meal times were irregular. **However he did not even take** notice of this.

From here Swamishri went to Ukai on 26 September 1978. At that time he was suffering from pyorrhoea and as a result his gums were causing him terrible pain. The next day Swamishri went from Karcheliya to Songadh. In the scorching heat of the afternoon, he had to attend a assembly which had been held in a hall where the roof was made of corrugated iron sheets. **It** was like an oven inside and there were no fans. To top it all, **that** oday was *ekadashi* and so as Swamishri had observed a *nirjala* fast, he had not **taken a drop of** water. Though it must be said that even on normal days he would leave straight after breakfast and would only touch water when he returned for lunch, which could be anytime between 2 and 4 pm. He would never ask for water

during *padhramanis* and would only take a sip if he was offered some, and that too, only if it had been offered to Thakorji first.

In the evening he went to Virpur and from there to Vyara; he attended assemblies in both places. The next day he went to Kapura. There he attended a small assembly in **the morning at** the home of Nrusinhbhai Suman (of Toronto). Narayan Bhagat (Viveksagar Swami) was giving a speech when Swamishri arrived. It was at this time that Swamishri's condition began to worsen. His complexion became flushed, all this was probably the result of the previous day's fast. Though he pretended that everything was normal, it was obvious that something was wrong. Narayan Bhagat felt Swamishri's hand; it was burning hot. Immediately taking the initiative, he cut short his speech and then ended the assembly **abruptly**. The sadhus helped Swamishri to the car and rushed him to Jitubhai Shah's house in Vyara.

His room was on the first floor, though by now he was so weak that the sadhus had to carry him up the stairs. Before we could even spread the **bedsheet** he fell flat on the bed. The devotees had gone to fetch a doctor. Meanwhile, some of the sadhus began to massage his body and another sadhu gave him some medicine for temporary relief. However, as the minutes ticked by his condition continued to worsen. He was now in a semi-conscious state, his speech became slurred, and it was difficult to **make out** what he was saying.

Despite the seriousness of his condition, as he was leaving Kapura he mumbled, "I hope Suman's father doesn't feel offended at us leaving like this..." and, "Poor Mahendrabhai (of the neighbouring village Madi), he had made so many preparations for our visit, and we couldn't go..." The only pain he felt was that of disappointing the devotees.

Then at 11:30 am Swamishri sat upright in bed and asked, "Have you offered lunch to Harikrishna Maharaj?" "Yes, Aksharswarup Swami **has prepared** the food **and is now** offering the *thal* in the mandir." **With** satisfaction written all over his face, Swamishri lay

down and went to sleep. His thoughts were only with Thakorji.

The next day Swamishri went from Vyara to Sankari. By now his fever had subsided. Until now he still hadn't told anyone about the pain in his gums. Dr. Ramanbhai from Bardoli came and it was decided to take Swamishri to Ahmedabad the following day. By sheer coincidence the very next day, a renowned dentist from Rajkot, Lambashankarbhai came to Sankari for Swamishri's darshan. Since Swamishri was staying at Somabhai's house, he came there, and upon inspecting Swamishri's mouth he discovered the root of the problem. As he gently pressed the lower gum a spray of pus shot out, he exclaimed, "Only Swamishri could have tolerated so much pain for so long!"

He extracted the remaining pus and gave Swamishri a glass of potassium permanganate to **wash his mouth**. For the next few days the fever came and went, but Swamishri made a full recovery.

Remembering such incidents, I become overwhelmed with emotion. For Swamishri, there is only Shriji Maharaj; to please **Him** is his goal; his life.

Only then is all this possible.

I pray that we too, can all imbibe such devotion to God.



SADHU PRABHUSWARUPDAS

To ask me to write about Swamishri's life is like giving a sweet to a dumb man and then asking him **to describe the taste**. How could he answer you? He can **only** taste it.

The virtues in Swamishri are infinite, how can we possibly describe them in **words**?

On many occasions I have been by Swamishri's side. During these times I have come to realize how intense his devotion to God really is, how resolute he is in abiding by his *niyams*, how he resolutely observes his code of celibacy, how he wishes to help one and all, and his compassion, humility and understanding towards those people who come in **contact with him**.

In 1972, during the month of Kartik (November-December) Swamishri, along with 56 sadhus and 800 devotees **started** on a pilgrimage of India **by** a special train.

Once, the train was at the platform of Allahabad Station. The sadhus and devotees were sitting outside having darshan of Swamishri doing his puja. Just then three fruit vendors pushed their carts towards us. All three had only one fruit - *jamrukh*. In no time the devotees had bought them all, leaving the vendors walking away with a smile. Many devotees put their fruit by Swamishri's puja as an offering to Thakorji. After Swamishri finished his puja he told us, "Collect all the fruit in some baskets and put them in our carriage." He then added, "Put four baskets aside in my compartment, the rest are yours to eat." I began to wonder what Swamishri intended to do with four baskets of *jamrukh*.

From Allahabad we came to Ayodhya. There we were to go to the old Swaminarayan mandir, and it was there that we were going to have lunch. Before we got off the train Swamishri instructed me, "Take two baskets of *jamrukh* and give them to

the sadhus in the mandir. Tell them that we have brought the fruit for Thakorji. From here we'll be going to Chhapaiya, make sure that you take the remaining two baskets and give them to the sadhus in the mandir there."

It was then that I realized why Swamishri had the four baskets kept aside. Right from Allahabad, he had been thinking as to what he would offer Thakorji in Ayodhya and Chhapaiya. While we were all looking forward to eating the fruit, he was thinking of offering them to Thakorji in the two mandirs. In those days there was not much fruit available in Chhapaiya and so this rare offering proved to be even more special.

ddd

In June 1979, Swamishri was touring in the Mahuva area of the Surat district. It was an area populated mostly by backward class people.

Swamishri was in Karcheliya village where he was staying at the home of Dr. Madanbhai Vyas. One morning he went to Ranchhodbhai's house for breakfast. As the *thal* was still being offered to Thakorji when he arrived, Swamishri sat down in an armchair in another room. I sat down beside him. Swamishri's eye fell on a stick of *datan* lying on the floor next to his chair. He picked it up and began to inspect it, it had been prepared as if it were to be offered to Thakorji. He asked me, "Why is the *datan* like this?"

"It must have been offered to Thakorji this morning and must have fallen here." Swamishri wryly commented, "Is this the type of *datan* you people offer to Thakorji? Look, it hasn't even been cleaned properly." He held the *datan* in front of me and pointed out some tiny thorns which hadn't been removed. I said, "The *pujari* probably didn't notice them."

"That's just not good enough! If it's to be offered to Thakorji then it should be perfectly prepared. This sort of carelessness is just not acceptable!"

Where Thakorji is concerned, Swamishri doesn't stand for anything but the best. Everything should be prepared as if Thakorji is really using it!



(Sadhu Prabhuswarupdas passed away on 8 February 2001,
aged 54.)

SADHU YOGISWARUPDAS

1970, Sarangpur. The devotees of Mumbai had donated a golden throne for the *murtis* of Dharmakul. It was installed amidst great fanfare by Yogiji Maharaj.

In those days, all the festivals were organized under the direct supervision of Swamishri. That afternoon, the devotees were all seated in the dining hall opposite the assembly arena. As usual, Swamishri was also there to oversee the serving of the food. Some sadhus and devotees began to serve, but from the beginning it was obvious that there weren't enough of us. Swamishri noticed this immediately, he tied his *gataryu* around his waist, raised his *dhotiyu* and picked up a bowl of *mohanthal*. He told me, "Look, this is how you serve. First tuck your *dhotiyu* in like this, so it doesn't hang in the way. And serve only with your right hand." With that he began serving the devotees. Seeing Swamishri coming to serve them the devotees were delighted. He called each one by name as he served them, and asked the name and village of those whom he didn't recognize.

In all his activities he always keeps two principles in mind: to please Maharaj and to please the devotees.

It's not possible to endure the types of hardships he has, without such thoughts in one's heart.

ddd

During his last illness, Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj was admitted to the Bhatiya Hospital in Mumbai. All of us younger sadhus were always anxious to know the day's events at the hospital, such as, Yogi Bapa's condition, what medication he was being given, what the doctors thought, etc. Every night, when Pramukh Swami returned from the hospital, we would gather around him and ask him questions. Patiently, Swamishri answered all of our barrage of questions and gave a full report of what had taken place at the hospital. At the end he would

always try and keep our spirits up by saying, “He is getting stronger now and his health was much better today.”

One evening Swamishri asked all of us, “All of you should start to do one more *mala* in your puja for Yogiji Maharaj’s speedy recovery.”

I began the very next morning. Though, shortly afterwards, Yogiji Maharaj passed away, I’ve continued to do that one extra *mala*, for Swamishri’s health.

Then in 1972 we were in Delhi during the special train pilgrimage with Swamishri. A assembly was held on the platform in the presence of Swamishri. I gave a *mala* made of tulsi to Swamishri for him to sanctify. The assembly went on for thirty minutes, and afterwards, giving me the *mala* back Swamishri said, “You still do that one extra *mala* in your puja don’t you?”

I couldn’t believe it! “Yes Swami. Even after Yogiji Maharaj left I still continue to do the extra *mala*.”

In this way he expressed his happiness at my small gesture.

ddd

1984-1985. Swamishri was suffering terrible pain due to a stone in the gall bladder. I got the news in Rajkot. I was, however, not sure if he had a gall bladder stone or a kidney stone. At that time I was suffering from a kidney stone. An ayurvedic doctor had prescribed *jav* water (*jav* grains crushed and diluted with water). I drank it and after four days the stone was washed out of my system. It worked so well that I decided to write to Swamishri as a cure.

Swamishri replied immediately, “*Jav* water won’t be of any use against this stone. Because it is from Akshardham!”

I realized that his words meant to say that a Satpurush doesn’t suffer illness because of fate. But rather, he takes on the pains of his devotees of his own accord. Even though he has the power to cure himself he never does, saying that it is God’s wish that he is ill.



SADHU NARENDRAPRASADDAS

(Acharya Swami)

The years between 1966 and 1972 were some of the most memorable and luckiest years of my life. As a student away from home, I stayed at the Akshar Purushottam Chhatralay in Vidyanagar. When I first arrived, I had no interest in Satsang at all. Nationalism, to me, seemed far more important. Fortunately, having come into contact with sadhus, more importantly Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami, my energies were diverted and channelled into satsang.

I had been at the hostel for a short time when I first noticed Pramukh Swami. My friend, Kirit Patel (presently Akshaymuni Swami) forced me to accompany him to a conference in Gana, a neighbouring village. He mentioned, though it didn't mean much to me then, that Yogiji Maharaj would be there. Two other friends, Jayant Joshi and Dipak Jadeja, who were also non-satsangis, agreed to go too. The year was 1967.

He suggested that we leave early by skipping dinner. I argued as the dinner was served at 5 pm, we could eat and then leave. He told me not to bother about food as everything would be taken care of once we reached Gana. The four of us got onto our bicycles and rode off towards Gana. As we arrived in Gana, a huge procession was in progress. It was not Yogiji Maharaj who was sitting on the elephant, but we saw Pramukh Swami Maharaj followed by a huge crowd. I wryly commented, "Our stomachs are churning and this Maharaj is riding in a procession."

God knows why, but amid the fanfare, Swamishri's gaze fell upon us standing on the side. He signalled to us to come closer. He then signalled to a youth to take us to the kitchen and feed us. Jayant said, "This Maharaj seems to understand!"

The poor youth was reluctant to leave the joyful atmosphere of the procession, so I told him, "Don't worry, you stay here. We'll

be able to find our way to the kitchen.”

“I can’t let you do that!” he replied. “Swamishri **has** commanded me to take you, so that is what I will do.”

He came with us all the way. In the evening, we had darshan of Yogiji Maharaj and then returned to Vidyanagar.

This one incident **has convinced me of** the sharpness of Swamishri’s vision, his caring nature towards **youths** and the readiness of his **young devotees** to follow his every word.

ddd

It was the vacation of 1968-1969. Most of the students had gone home, but a few of us had stayed **back**. We were staying in room number 14. I was reading late one night when there was a knock at the door. **As** it was open, I didn’t get up. Slowly the caller pushed it **open**, it was **none other than** Pramukh Swami! He had just arrived in Vidyanagar from a nearby village, carrying his *potlas*, and both he and his attendant sadhu looked very tired. It so happened that **Jaykrishna Bhagat** who looked after the hostel had already gone to sleep. Swamishri saw the light **in** our room, and so, rather than wake them up he came and knocked on our door.

My roommates and I jumped up. We said that we’d go and inform **Bhagat** that he had arrived, but he stopped us, “There’s no need, let them sleep. We’ll spend the night here in your room.”

So we gave them bedding belonging to some students who had gone home.

Now it was our regular time for a cup of tea. Summoning up all my courage, I meekly asked Swamishri, “We were going to make some hot milk, will you have some with us?” Swamishri replied, “Let me make it, let’s see how it turns out.”

He went out onto our balcony, where our stove was and started making the hot milk. His attendant sadhu began arranging the *potlas* in one corner and then laid out Swamishri’s bedding. In no time Swamishri entered the room holding three cups. To our astonishment, he hadn’t made hot milk, he had actually made tea for us!

“It’s tea!” exclaimed my roommate.

“Swami. How did you know that we really wanted to drink tea?” I asked.

“It’s obvious isn’t it.” he answered softly.

My thoughts were now developing into respect.

Without taking anything himself, he settled down on the bedding on the floor. “Swami please. Sleep on the bed...” we begged.

But he stayed on the floor, while we all slept in our beds.

When Jaykrishna Bhagat came to wake us up in the morning, he was alarmed to find Swamishri sleeping on the floor. Immediately he began prostrating before Swamishri. He simply couldn’t believe the story when we told him about the previous night’s events.

So much authority, and yet so unceremonious.

Two years after that night, Swamishri told me, “Until now you have been drinking tea, I think it’s time that you put an end to that habit.” **I obeyed his word.**

In those days we would often go the cinema. Then Swamishri gave me the responsibility of making sure that none of the boys from the hostel went to watch films. So I had to stop that too.

ddd

April 22, 1972. Kirit and I went to Sarsa for Swamishri’s darshan. As we had to get back to Vidyanagar the same evening we took leave of Swamishri and walked to the outskirts of the village to **catch** a bus. It so happened that Swamishri had to go to Ahmedabad on urgent **work**. As his car turned out of the village he must have seen us on the roadside. It pulled up slightly ahead. As we ran up to see him, he asked, “How are you going to get to Vidyanagar?”

“We’ll find something,” we said lamely.

“Get in the car. We’ll drop you off at Vidyanagar and go to Ahmedabad from there.”

So we got in. As we approached Anand Town Hall we suggested, “Bapa, we’ll make our own way from here. So you can go straight on instead of having to turn in to Vidyanagar.”

“No, no,” he insisted, “There’s no problem. We’ll take you all the way.”

And he did, even though it was late and he still had to get to Ahmedabad.

ddd

1977 was a year of drought in Gujarat. Swamishri instructed us to send six groups of sadhus to Saurashtra for the relief work and comfort devotees. Dr. Swami and I made a list of sadhus who should go and went to show it to Swamishri on 20 May 1977 in Gadhada.

Swamishri was in his room. When we entered, he was sitting on a simple blanket writing letters. As we went in he said, “Welcome, come in. Here take a seat...” He began to look around for a blanket for Dr. Swami to sit on, just then the lights went out.

I said, “Bapa, we’ll meet afterwards.”

“No, no,” he replied, “sit down. We can still hear each other can’t we. It’ll be no problem.”

We both sat opposite Swamishri and began explaining the details of the list. When the lights came on we were horror-stricken by what we saw. In the darkness, Swamishri had pulled away his blanket and pushed it towards us and made us sit on it. He himself was sitting on the bare floor! In just a few seconds, he saw the opportunity to serve his sadhus and seized it with the utmost humility.

We jumped to our feet, still Swamishri said, “O do sit down, sit down.”

ddd

1977. Swamishri came to Ahmedabad. The youths, who were travelling with him, were given the hall above Swamishri’s old room to sleep for the night. It was very cold that night and one of the youths, Jagdish (presently Narayancharan Swami) was ill. I searched in vain for a blanket for him. It must have been close to midnight. I was worried about his condition, suddenly Swamishri appeared in the hall. In his hand he had a blanket. He gave it to

me and said, “Here, give this to Jagdish.” **Then he went back.**

The next morning we discovered that Swamishri had given me his own blanket, **spending** the whole night with only his *gataryu* for warmth.

ddd

Swamishri was staying at Manibhai’s house in Utela (in Kheda district). **He** was sitting in the assembly writing letters. After finishing one pile he put the cap on his pen. Just as he was putting it down, Dharmacharan Swami **placed** another pile in front of him. **I burst out**, “Bapa, leave it for now!”

Swamishri looked at me as if he understood, “Acharya, we should never think bad of our *seva*.” Then he continued, “Think of the person who has written the letter, they must be eagerly awaiting the reply. For them the question or problem is of the utmost importance. And even if I did stop, all that will happen is the pile will get bigger and bigger, and in the end I’ll still have to answer each one. So I might as well finish them now.”

Solving devotees’ problems is not an obligation to him, it’s his *seva*.

ddd

5 February 1983, Sundalpura. Swamishri was **performing** puja when he **felt** a sudden **pain**. It began as a terrific pain on the left side of his chest. Before anyone could guess what was happening, he’d had **the heart** attack!

Unlike normal days, **that** was the first time I had come to Swamishri’s residence without having done my puja. When I arrived I saw the commotion and at once sensed that something was wrong. Dr. Manibhai was having trouble finding Swamishri’s pulse. Tension ran high. After a while he found it. **Heaving** a **sigh** of relief, we ran to the nearest telephone (there was only one in the whole village, fortunately it had been installed only a short time ago) to send the news to all the senior sadhus of the tragedy.

Swamishri was being rushed to Vadodara in a high speed

convoy of cars, when suddenly he told his driver to stop the car. So, every vehicle screeched to a halt, and fearing the worst, we all ran to his car. With great difficulty he murmured, “Tomorrow there is a *parayan* at Dahyabhai Gajjar’s house in Anand. You go, (telling me) make sure that everything is taken care of. Explain why I couldn’t come...”

His worry always is how not to disappoint his devotees!

ddd

In 1988, I went on an overseas *satsang* tour with Swamishri, during which I had spent several wonderful moments with him. One, which particularly touched my heart, took place in Los Angeles during the *patotsav* (*murti-pratishtha* anniversary) of the mandir.

We were supposed to go out during the ceremony. At the time Swamishri was performing the rituals. When I approached him to take his leave he said, “Before you leave you can do this *seva*,” throwing me the towel with which he had been drying the *murti* of Maharaj. So I began to dry the *murti* of Gunatitanand Swami. As I was doing so, I began to wonder if Gunatitanand Swami really was in the *murti* like we say he is. So out of curiosity I pressed his toe. Swamishri was facing the other way, suddenly he spun around and looked at me, it was as if I had pressed his toe! He said, “Gently, Acharya!” Overwhelmed, I asked, “How did you know?”

He smiled, “Of course I know.”

We talk of his oneness with Maharaj and Swami. It was then that I realized what it really meant.



SADHU TYAGSWARUPDAS

Swamishri was to fly from Ahmedabad to Delhi for the *murti-pratishtha* ceremony of the *hari* mandir. He was to spend only one day in Ahmedabad - 24 February 1994. That same morning, he had to consecrate the *murtis* in the mandir at Vehlal. Thus his schedule was very tight. At that time, Purushottambhai (Yogmuni Swami's father) of Raniyara, who was serving in Gadhada mandir had come to Ahmedabad with a female member of his family. Apparently she had a heart disorder and the doctors who examined her said that an operation would be necessary and the cost would be up to 15,000 rupees. Hearing this he became depressed. I told him to tell Swamishri, but I didn't have the courage to take him to Swamishri myself, who was already extremely busy.

Just then Mahendrabhai of Birmingham, Alabama, phoned from America. He said that Bhadreshbhai of Bhadran had a heart problem and asked me to inform Swamishri and ask for his blessings.

Swamishri's flight was at 9 pm. At around 6 pm I went to Swamishri's room on top floor of the Aksharpath building. Just then, Brahmanuni Swami brought Purushottambhai to meet Swamishri. They told him the whole story. He asked, "What does Dr. Bajadia have to say?"

"He also says that an operation is necessary."

Swamishri said, "Then get it done." Purushottambhai was unable to say anything, so I told Swamishri that he had another problem.

Swamishri asked, "What is it?"

I described his weak financial situation.

Swamishri told me, "Tell Dr. Bajadia to meet me." But Dr. Bajadia had already left for Delhi. So, when Swamishri arrived in Delhi, despite being busy meeting new devotees and making final preparations for the ceremony, he sought out Dr. Bajadia. First, Dr. Bajadia phoned Rushiraj Swami and explained what

needed to be done to arrange for the operation. Then Swamishri himself phoned me and said, “Tell Purushottambhai to go ahead with the operation and to pay as much as he can, we’ll cover the remaining costs. Dr. Tejas Patel (Dr. M.R. Patel’s son) works in the Civil Hospital. He is a heart specialist. I’ve already phoned him and told him to make sure that the best possible arrangements are made for this operation.”

Watching Swamishri’s deep concern for Purushottambhai’s situation, and how he made all the arrangements himself, one truly feels that our only true relative is Swamishri!



SADHU SHVETVAIKUNTHDAS

The Satpurush is the living embodiment of knowledge.

In 1984, Swamishri embarked upon a world tour to propagate the Bicentenary Birthday Celebrations of Gunatitanand Swami. At that time, in India, a series of discussions were held in the presence of the *sadguru* sadhus, regarding the philosophical accuracy of articles written by Harshadbhai Dave entitled, ‘*Yadaksharam vedvidho vadanti*’.

Though Swamishri wasn’t present, he still took a deep interest in these discussions through correspondence. His letters were inspiring, sometimes filled with nothing but light hearted humour and refreshing after a long day filled with mind-boggling philosophy!

We decided that it would be best to discover the answers to many of the philosophical questions raised during the discussion from Swamishri when he returned.

After Gunatitanand Swami’s 199th birthday celebration in Bhadra, and Swamishri’s 64th birthday in Mehsana, Swamishri came to Mumbai. From December 21 to 23, he sat with twenty to twenty-five sadhus from 10 pm to 12:30 am and answered all our questions. After this it was decided to publish these questions and answers in the form of a book. The task of writing the book was assigned to Shrutiprakash Swami, myself, Rameshbhai and Kishorebhai Dave. Thus the publication ‘*Swaminarayan Vedanta - Ek Ruprekha*’ (Swaminarayan Vedanta - An Outline) came into being. At the time of writing this book, Swamishri was busy touring villages and *satsang* centres. So if we had any questions, we would write to Swamishri and have his reply by letter.

I once wrote to Swamishri in reference to the different levels of *muktas* (liberated souls). Aksharbrahman is one and indivisible. And one who attains a total likeness to him is liberated from *maya*. Now, if all the souls become like Aksharbrahman, then

naturally we would assume that they would all be at the same level as each other. However, in Vachanamrut Sarangpur 17, Shriji Maharaj says that there are different levels of *muktas*. He uses the example of a mosquito and *garud* (the divine eagle) to illustrate how the *muktas* are different from each other. We often heard Sant Swami say, “All these distinctions are here on earth, but they do not exist in Akshardham. By mentioning ‘on earth’ he was referring to our Satsang, in which there are new devotees and spiritually elevated devotees. The difference between them is obvious. These are the distinctions. A freshman in medical school is called a doctor and someone who is an FRCS is also called a doctor. But there is a clear difference between the two. Similarly there is a clear difference between a devotee who has just recently come into Satsang, a *mukta* who has attained spiritual greatness and an *akshar-mukta*. But those differences are only here on earth.” I asked Swamishri if this was correct.

Swamishri wrote his reply on 29 December 1984 from Navsari. He explained, “The difference mentioned in Sarangpur-17 is **with** reference to a difference in *upasana*. In that Maharaj says that there is a difference in the abodes of the various gods. And that there is a difference between the *muktas* who reside in those abodes. A person goes to the abode of whichever god he worships - in other words he attains the abode according to his *upasana*. As there are different *upasanas*, there is a difference between the people who adhere to those *upasanas*. On earth also, there is a difference in the level, the intensity of bliss and tranquillity which these people attain. This is what makes up the different levels of *muktas*.”

Swamishri’s answer was so revealing. Faith in one’s *upasana* and the intensity of his efforts result in different attainments for each *mukta*. Sooner or later, all those who have faith in one supreme God will attain Akshardham.

So we can conclude that a difference in one’s spiritual level doesn’t mean that there is a difference in one’s *upasana*. Whereas

a difference in one's *upasana* determines which abode he attains.

It was the first time I had heard such an explanation. Despite being engrossed in a variety of Satsang activities, touring villages and cities, administration and the Satsang's financial affairs, he still possesses a powerful command over other fields such as art, music and philosophy. It sheds light on the depth of his study and thinking.

ddd

January 10, 1978. Nakuru, Kenya. As usual Swamishri read a Vachanamrut after his puja. Today he explained Vachanamrut Loya-11. Afterwards, he was meeting the devotees when a question was put to him, "Whenever *sadguru* sadhus or senior devotees explain this Vachanamrut, they all give a common definition that one who is ignorant is required to keep irrevocable fidelity towards God. Whereas, it is not so essential for one who is enlightened. So don't they need to keep fidelity towards God?"

Swamishri replied, "One who has been truly enlightened will see God in all three states (consciousness, deep sleep, dream), thus at all times he feels God's presence (Panchala-7), and he sees nothing but God. Automatically, he develops fidelity towards God, and so he doesn't actually need to be told to keep such fidelity. Whereas one who is not so enlightened, needs to be reminded repeatedly. That's the difference between the two. But ultimately, both must keep fidelity towards God."

ddd

June 1973, I was travelling with Swamishri as a *yuvak*. On his way to Bhadra Swamishri spent the night in the village of Paddhari, at the house of a Brahmin called Bhagwanbhai. In the evening, Swamishri returned to his residence after having been to some *padhramanis*. I was also there, but I couldn't find the door to the house. Two or three times I shouted, "Where's the gate?" Swamishri was standing beside me, he smiled and said, "The gate's right here (to Akshardham) and he (saying my name)

is looking for the gate!” Hearing this I looked at him and we both laughed. Then Swamishri clapped his hands, just like Yogi Bapa, and **he embraced** me.

Actually Swamishri had referred to the word ‘gate’ in a different manner, but then he covered it up with his loving embrace.

ddd

Tuesday, December 27, 1977, Mwanza (Africa). It was the **month** of *Dhanurmas* and each day the devotees would bring *shiro* from their homes. However, today it didn’t turn up and so the sadhu who normally laid out Swamishri’s puja, Gnanpriya Swami, went into the kitchen to make the *shiro*, and on the way he instructed me to **arrange** Swamishri’s puja. I had seen Swamishri’s puja many times, so it wasn’t a problem, but I didn’t know how to put everything away **once it was over**. Usually the *sevak* sadhus would do it and I never really paid much attention to that.

Swamishri began to read his Shikshapatri. Slowly I began to put everything away. However I wasn’t at all sure **if** what I was doing **was correct**. Swamishri **was** reading but from time to time he would watch me fumble around out of the corner of his eye. In between he would point out what to put where. I just about managed to put **things** away. After Swamishri finished reading, he gave me the book and as a light-hearted criticism he said, “It seems you haven’t been doing darshan very carefully.”

ddd

In 1985 Swamishri celebrated Yogiji Maharaj’s birthday in Gondal. After **that** he decided to go on a *panchtirthi* (pilgrimage) of all the local villages where Shriji Maharaj had stayed. Without **preparation** Swamishri visited all these villages and revived many old memories. One day Swamishri came to **the** village **of** Maliya **Hatina**. There is a mango grove in the village. It was here that Bhagatji Maharaj watered 300 mango trees with four buckets of water each! And as a result he won the blessings of Gunatitanand Swami. There is also another large tree from Gunatitanand Swami’s

time. Under this tree we held a small assembly. As we were leaving the grove, Swamishri put his right hand on Priyadarshan Swami's hand and his left hand in my hand and softly murmured, "It's a good thing you came along. In future you will be able to remember this day that we came here with Swami and enjoyed his blis^s."



SADHU JNANPRIYADAS

I was extremely fortunate to be chosen to accompany Swamishri on the 1977 overseas *satsang* tour as his attendant. It was an unforgettable tour. His schedule was so hectic, that from his night halt, he would go somewhere else in the morning to do puja, from there on to another place for breakfast, then of course the never ending flow of *padhramanis*, then finally lunch, rest at the next stop, again *padhramanis*, after that dinner, to the evening assembly, and finally he would reach his next night halt. By then it would be about 12:30 am!

One day, Swamishri sat down for lunch at 2:35 pm. In only seven minutes he finished eating, washed his hands and began to read the daily after-lunch Vachanamrut. He went to sleep at 3:05 pm. As he was lying down he told me, “Wake me up at 3:30.” While he wasn’t looking, I turned the clock back half an hour. Suddenly, he said, “It doesn’t matter how far back or forward you go. We’ve only got to go between eating and sleeping.” I didn’t understand so he clarified, “You may be thinking that by turning back the clock I’ll get more rest. But remember, no matter what you do to the clock, the number of *padhramanis* is still going to stay the same, and it’s going to take the same amount of time to complete them. The only difference will be that we’ll finish later at night. Turning back the clock isn’t going to make any difference in my work.”

During this tour Swamishri would cover over 3,000 miles by car. There were four drivers with us who worked in eight-hour shifts. Sometimes the devotees’ homes would be so far apart that we’d have to take a bath and also do our puja in a motel.

We left Kansas City at 6 pm on 11 October 1977. Two days and three nights later, at 9 am on 14 October 1977, we drove into Dublin, a suburb of San Francisco. Swamishri was to stay at the home of Ramanbhai Shah. After breakfast, Swamishri

enquired about the day's programme. It so happened that we had to leave for the assembly at 2:30 pm. The assembly itself was arranged between 3:30 pm to 5:30 pm. As there was no morning programme, **all of us** went to sleep. We were so exhausted from the extensive travelling that we all overslept, except Swamishri. He got up on his own and had a bath. As he didn't know where I had put the cloth he used to dry himself, he used his *dhotiyu* instead. Then he began waking us up one-by-one. "Wake up. Come on, it's time to go!"

After making a great effort to get ready in time, we arrived at the hall only to find that not a single person had turned up! So we all sat around Swamishri and passed the time remembering some of the funnier incidents from the past. At about 4:00 pm people began to slowly trickle in. The assembly finished at 6:00 pm. Afterwards, we returned to our residence, ate, sang *cheshta* and went to sleep. Again, all except Swamishri! He called Vinu Bhagat and began writing letters. It was 9:00 pm when he picked up his pen. Slowly the clock ticked away - 10:00 pm, 11:00 pm, finally at 12:45 am Vinu Bhagat said, "That's enough now. We'll continue tomorrow." Ignoring him Swamishri picked up another blank sheet and began to write. It was a letter to his regular attendant, Devcharan Swami, who was in India. Swamishri wrote, "**J**nanpriya is sitting opposite me. Pragat is walking up and down. But none of them have the courage to tell me, 'Enough, now go to sleep, so that we can all go to sleep.' If you were here you'd say, 'Put that stuff away!'" Swamishri was laughing as he wrote and then he tossed the letter over to me.

He finally went to sleep at 1:00 am.

He is so free with his disciples that he can joke **w**ith them in this manner.

Even with the **b**urden of travelling, *padhramanis*, assemblies and letter writing, all of which reduces a healthy man to nothing, it was amazing to see Swamishri so vibrant and fresh!

During the same tour Swamishri went to South Africa. One

day he sat down for lunch at 1:15 pm. We were all glad that for once, he would be able to go to sleep early. After he had finished eating he told us to read the daily Vachanamrut. Then he began to explain it, he talked so much that by the time he finished it was 2:30 pm. Swamishri looked at the clock and noticing that he'd be going to sleep at the normal time, he simply laughed to himself.

It seems as if when he isn't being stretched, he'll stretch himself. But never will he give any comfort to his body. And yet, he'll never disclose even the slightest hint of discomfort.

ddd

1982, Mumbai. He had only returned from abroad three days earlier when he left to tour the villages of Maharashtra. It was the peak of summer.

On 3 May 1982 Swamishri arrived in Dhuliya. Although Varkheda wasn't in the schedule, Swamishri expressed his wish to go there. The heat was suffocating and there was a power shortage, so there were no fans or cold water. After visiting the homes of each and every devotee, he went to the neighbouring village of Japi to meet a devotee called Madhubhai. We were all totally against this idea, but Swamishri insisted. As soon as we entered his house, Swamishri said, "We've come to fulfil your wish." On hearing this Madhubhai was overjoyed, meanwhile we were all baffled by what it could be. We soon found out that two years ago Madhubhai had asked Swamishri, "Where should I dig a well on my farm?"

Before replying Swamishri asked, "Where are you planning to dig it?"

Using a simple sketch Madhubhai showed Swamishri the spot for the proposed well. Swamishri advised him to dig it at the lower end of the field. When Madhubhai began digging, he hit water only 50 feet down! He was delighted, and so he also took a vow not to use water from the well, until Swamishri had **the first sip**.

Swamishri found out about this, and after **first** offering

the water to Thakorji, he had some himself and then sent the rest back. Seeing Swamishri come personally to fulfil his wish, Madhubhai was on the verge of tears.

Swamishri is the possessor of so many small hearts of so called small devotees.

Swamishri returned to Varkheda in the evening. As the electricity had not yet been restored, the assembly was held with the aid of a lantern. Even in the dim light, Swamishri sat there writing. After *cheshta* Swamishri went to sleep. It was 11:15 pm. As the power still hadn't been restored, it was very hot in the room and Swamishri couldn't sleep. He spent most of his time tossing and turning, he'd get up, go to the bathroom, and then try to get to sleep again. Still it was of no use. It was 2:00 am, when I asked, "Swami, aren't you sleepy?"

"I am, but it's too hot." he replied.

"Do you want to sleep outside on the terrace?"

"Let's go!"

I picked up his bedding and brought it to the terrace. Swamishri lay down. But even here, there wasn't even the slightest breeze, and the mosquitoes were unbearable. Swamishri sat up again. Suddenly raindrops began to fall, even though it was the middle of summer! Again he went back to the room below. Still he couldn't sleep.

As the clock struck 3:30 am, Swamishri got up on his own and walked out. I watched him go, but thinking that he'd be back after a few moments, I didn't stop him. He picked up a gourd and walked up to the roof. In a village such as this, all the roofs of the houses are connected. So one could reach the edge of the village by simply walking across the rooftops.

Ten to fifteen minutes passed, but still Swamishri had not returned. I got up and with a torch in my hand I went up onto the roof to see what Swamishri was doing, but to my horror, I couldn't find him anywhere. Immediately I woke up Dharmacharan Swami, "Get up, I can't find Swamishri!" Together we crossed a

few roofs looking for him, but we couldn't find him anywhere. After searching for over 20 minutes, we came back and woke up all the sadhus. We all set out to search the entire village! By now everyone was scared out of their wits! What could have happened? Where could he have gone?"

There was an old mandir, built by the *paramhansas*, situated on the edge of the village. We decided to look there. As we were walking towards it, in the distance we could see a small, solitary figure coming towards us, with a gourd in his hand. It was Swamishri. What a relief! We ran up to him and rained questions on him from all sides. "Where did you go?" "Why didn't you take someone with you?" "Don't you know this area is infested with poisonous snakes?"

Swamishri just stood there casually, as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. He replied, "Where do you think I went? Can't you see the gourd?" Everyone laughed. He added, "What was the point of troubling you? I didn't see the need to wake you and spoil your sleep unnecessarily. Besides, I've been here before, and I know my way around, so I decided to go on my own!"

When we returned to the house, Swamishri had a bath under a tap in the front yard. His simplicity is beyond all limits of comprehension. Having not yet fully recovered from the jet-lag of a long and strenuous foreign tour, having not yet acclimatized to the suffocating heat of an Indian summer, from the cool climate of Britain and the USA, he had chosen to travel in such an area as this, where the temperature would reach up to forty-five degrees **celcius** during the day.



SADHU BRAHMAPRAKASHDAS

Swamishri was in Ahmedabad. A debate had been organized between two teams of sadhus. The leader of one team was Shrihari Swami and I was the leader of the other. Their argument was, “Seva is more vital in strengthening one’s Satsang.” We argued that, “Katha is more important.” It was a lively debate but as time had run out, we agreed to stop.

We then asked Swamishri for his judgement as to who won the debate. He began by praising both teams and repeating some of the good points put forth, but he wouldn’t give a definite judgement. Becoming impatient I asked, “Bapa! Who actually won?”

Swamishri laughed and said, “I’ve said what I thought. It’s a case of ‘they all drew their swords and my eyes shut!’” (It’s a phrase from a story about a businessman who was called to testify in a murder case between two groups. He realized that if he took one side then the other side would probably kill him after the trial. So to escape such a fate, he described how the two groups began arguing and then ‘when they drew their swords, my eyes shut. So I didn’t actually see who killed who...’)

Everyone burst into laughter. So I said, “This type of judgement will not do. Since Shrihari Swami is senior to me I accept defeat.”

So Shrihari Swami got up and said, “No, I admit that without *katha* one cannot attain *moksha*. You win, we lose.”

I countered, “You are equivalent to being my guru, you are learned and more experienced, and you’ve been a sadhu for many years. I can’t defeat you.” He replied, “You’ve won.”

“No, you’ve won.”

Then we both embraced each other. Seeing this Swamishri immediately said, “There you are, you’ve got your result. The fact that you embraced at the end was touching, I liked that. If

one really wants to progress he needs both *seva* and *katha*. They are equally essential. They should always be kept together, just as these two came together.”

ddd

1985. During the Bicentennial Birthday Celebrations of Gunatitanand Swami, Swamishri had just left the stage and was getting into his car. Seeing him from a distance I ran over to him. Seeing me run towards him, he began to close his window. Just as I reached his door the window closed shut. Inside, Swamishri was laughing at me. I put my hand on the glass. In an amazing gesture, Swamishri also put his hand against the glass, and then adjusted his fingers so that they were exactly aligned with mine! Only the glass was between us. After a few seconds he pressed the button with his other hand and slowly the glass began to wind down, but our hands remained in the same place. Gradually they came together. He gripped my hand and laughed. He made me realize that he has come down from Akshardham especially to hold our hand, but, like the glass, our perception of him being ‘human’ like ourselves gets in between. If we discard such thoughts, then we will be able to reach him, to hold his hand and touch him.

With that he signalled to his driver and left for his room, leaving me dazed.

ddd

I once wrote a letter to Swamishri on the 29 October 1983 and I received the reply on the 30th - the very next day! He sent his reply in the same envelope which I had sent my letter in. The wonderful thing was that where I had written his name, he had crossed it out himself and in the top corner of the envelope he drew a small box and wrote my name in it. I’ve treasured that envelope to this very day.

A few months later, Swamishri came to Ahmedabad. Whilst he was having his dinner, I took the envelope to him and showing it to him I said, “Do you know whose name I wrote on this cover?”

The sadhu who beholds God himself in every inch of his body - the Pragat Brahmaswarup - that's his name right there. Do you think it's right for you to cross it out like this?"

Swamishri smiled, "Only I have the right to cross it out, nobody else can cross it out, not you, not anybody!"

He said it so naturally that everyone listening immediately got the conviction of his divinity. It was as if he were saying, "The one whom they call Pragat Brahmaswarup, or the form of God, is I. No one can change that and no one on this earth can ever cross out that fact!"

ddd

1990, Vallabh Vidyanagar. As part of the International Youth Convention the youths from Ahmedabad were going to perform a play which I had written called *Drashta*. A few minutes before the start of the performance, as always before the start of a play, I went to Swamishri for his blessings. He was sitting on a sofa in front of the stage. I said, "Bapa. We're going to start now."

Swamishri leaned forward and said, "Look Brahma. It should be perfect; make sure it goes smoothly. There should be no sudden stops in the middle."

Swamishri was referring to the previous day's programme in which there had been an interruption due to some technical fault. I assured him, "Bapa. All the preparations are perfect, there won't be any hitches. All we need now are your blessings."

Swamishri replied, "You have my blessings, but before you start, check everything one more time. There are many important guests here today, so it shouldn't look like some amateur production."

He leaned back and introduced me to the guests sitting beside him. Then I went to the side of the stage where Premvadan Swami was waiting. "Is everything ready? Shall I start the tape?" he asked.

"Just one minute," I said, "Bapa's told me to check everything one last time."

Upon inspection we found the switch for the general stage

lights was on a switchboard which was some distance away from the stage. I had placed youths on the special effects lights, the projector and the fog machine, but I had overlooked this switchboard. At once I sent a youth who knew the script to sit by the board. There were many parts in the play where all the lights would have to be switched off so that the audience could see the slides and the special effects. After this last minute correction, we began. It was a great success. But if Swamishri hadn't insisted on making a final check, there would have been a fiasco with people running around back stage shouting, "Lights out" and someone else saying, "I can't find the switch..." Resulting in total chaos.

ddd

In 1972, Swamishri celebrated the Jaljhilani festival in Sarangpur. After his puja, Swamishri accidentally broke his *kanthi*. Devcharan Swami gave him a new one, so I asked if I could have his old one. He refused. So I said, "Then give me the one you've just put on and wear a new one." Again he refused, "What's the point of collecting such things? Of what use is it to you?"

In the afternoon, we all went for a swim in the step well behind the mandir. Someone said, "Bapa. Ghanshyam Bhagat is an expert diver."

Swamishri looked at me and said, "Let's see your skills."

I stepped up to the very top ledge and performed different types of somersault dives. Swamishri was impressed and said, "It's pretty good how you turn upside down and fall in."

I got carried away and said, "Bapa. Show us a dive."

Swamishri said, "I can't jump from the top, so I'll jump from here."

He stood on the steps and got ready to dive in. All the sadhus got out of the water to watch. Swamishri thrust himself forward, but instead of going in head first, he turned over and fell in flat on his back. There was a loud noise. As he swam out he said, "That was a somersault wasn't it? I'm not very good at doing anything

crooked or twisted, I'm only used to doing everything straight."

As he was drying himself, Pragat Bhagat noticed that his *kanthi* was missing. Three to four of us jumped in to try and retrieve it but it was no use. So Devcharan Swami got out another one. While Swamishri was putting on his *dhotiyu* I said, "Bapa, when I asked you for your *kanthi* you said no. And yet you let this one go into the well."

Swamishri immediately replied, "Do you know how much *seva* this well has done? It has served Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj many, many times. So it took it. Whoever does *seva* always gets his reward."



SADHU NIKHILESHDAS

In 1973, Swamishri came to Atladra to celebrate the festival of **Janmashtmi. I was a youth and had not taken the *diksha* as a sadhu.** I had been placed in charge of the audio room. Right from the start, the morning assembly was packed with speeches and kirtans. There was only a short break of 30 minutes between the morning and afternoon sessions. This meant that I had to sit there all day. During the break I decided to rush home and have something to eat. Inevitably I was late in getting back. The elderly devotees began scolding me, “Where on earth have you been?” and “Don’t you realize what time it is?” and “What are you thinking of...?”

At the same time, Swamishri entered the assembly. I looked down, feeling embarrassed. Swamishri immediately sensed what was happening and said, “The poor boy has been on duty **since morning**. If it’s all right for all of you to all get up and walk around then what’s wrong if he takes a break too?”

I went back into the audio room, greatly relieved that Swamishri had taken my side,

This is a unique quality of Swamishri. Whoever serves in a mandir, even if they make a mistake, Swamishri always stands by them. And if someone is not capable of doing certain jobs, Swamishri encourages him and lets him know that he trusts him. As a result such a simple person is able to take on a difficult task with confidence, and complete it. Sometimes even better than anyone would have expected.

ddd

In 1992 the final preparations for Yogiji Maharaj’s Centenary Celebrations were in full swing. But there was so much left to do with so little time to do it. Everywhere one looked, there were volunteers, craftsmen and labourers toiling away at a frantic pace. Though, in my mind I was doubtful if we could finish the

work on time.

Swamishri was staying in Gandhinagar at the home of Gordhanbhai Patel in Sector 29. However, I didn't have the courage to go and face him. If I went, he'd ask, "How much work has been completed?" Obviously I'd have to give him a full report and reveal how much work was really left. And with only one week remaining before the opening ceremony, I was certain that he wouldn't be too pleased.

Some of the sadhus were discussing possible solutions on how to finish the work on time. We weren't making much progress, so we thought that we may as well go and have darshan of Swamishri and then we'd sit down and think afterwards.

Swamishri was having breakfast when we arrived. We prostrated before him and sat down. Since there were no visitors that morning he smiled at us and said, "Come, sit closer..."

Before we could say anything, Priyadarshan Swami said, "Nikhilesh Swami is in tension about whether or not the work will be finished on time."

I tried to defend myself, "Obviously, at this stage there's going to be tension. All day all I think about is, 'Will the work be completed or not...'"

Calmly Swamishri said, "There's no need to worry. Understand that God will work through you and everything will be completed."

"But I'm not going to be able to do everything on my own, am I?"

"God will **enter and pervade** everyone 100%. Who are we to be able to complete such a great task? Put the entire burden on his shoulders," then he advised us, "Look, **when we inaugurate** the festival it doesn't mean that absolutely everything has to be ready. Just finish off what is necessary for the opening ceremony, and you can finish the rest of the work, such as food stalls and commercial stalls afterwards. Keep Maharaj with you and keep going. It's Yogi Bapa's festival, he'll take care of everything..."

Swamishri spoke so calmly and assuringly that all the tension seemed to just melt away. Hearing his words, we left inspired. Working day and night, we got the work finished.

In such situations, any other leader would have been under great stress. And thus he would put even greater pressure on his men to get the job done. Whereas, Swamishri remained as calm and light as a spring breeze. True to his words he put the strength of God in all of us. This has been my greatest experience with Swamishri.



SADHU JANMANGALDAS

In 1978, Swamishri was touring the villages surrounding Damnagar. We came to Nanivavdi. The day began with Swamishri sitting in a procession **that went** throughout the whole village, followed by *padhramanis*, dinner and assembly. Finally, he was free at midnight. It was obvious that he was worn out when he lay down on his bed. Still, while we **were** massaging his feet in the dark, he asked, “Have you sung *cheshta*?” I said, “Yes.” I thought that as he was tired he’d accept my answer and go to sleep. Instead he enquired further, “When exactly did you sing it? Who else was there?” I remained silent. Swamishri got the message and immediately sat up. He told one of the sadhus to switch the light on and sang the entire *cheshta*. He eventually got to sleep at 1 a.m.

When it comes to devotion, tired limbs and aching joints are of no importance **to him**.

ddd

1981. In the morning, Swamishri installed the images in the new mandir in Basej, a small village in North Gujarat. When he woke up from his afternoon nap, he was having some fruits. I asked, “What is Akshardham like?”

Swamishri replied, “Have you ever seen a mobile hospital? It’s similar to that, this (pointing to himself) is a mobile Akshardham.” The next day Swamishri was to go to Abu, so he said, “Akshardham is going to Abu tomorrow.” I never expected a reply like that!

ddd

1982. Swamishri was travelling in the Kapadvanj district. He would visit three different villages in a single day! **On 21** February 1982, Swamishri was going from Torana to Klesar. In between there was a well belonging to an old man. His home was a small shed made of corrugated iron sheets next to the

well. Swamishri was to stop here. Having travelled to two villages, Swamishri was to have his lunch in a third one.

The old man had collected some flowers, and was making a garland for Swamishri.

I said, "Put the flowers by Thakorji and do the *arti*."

He refused, "No, I want to garland Pramukh Swami first."

Swamishri told me, "Let him make it, the more you talk to him the longer he'll take to finish it."

But he was ever so slow so I said, "Here, let me make it for you."

Again he refused, "No. I want to make it myself and put it on Pramukh Swami."

Swamishri called me, "Come and sit here and sing a kirtan."

Swamishri sat patiently until the old man finished making the garland. The old man offered it to Thakorji, put it around Swamishri and performed the *arti*. Even though we were very late, and Swamishri still had to have lunch, he forgot about all that and fulfilled the wishes of an old man.

ddd

In 1983 Swamishri came to Nadiad from Dabhan. Dinner was arranged at the house of Champaksinh Gohil (the then president of the district). Champaksinh did *pujan* of Swamishri and made a donation of 100 rupees. At the time, I didn't see who took the money. So, the next day I reminded the area co-ordinator of Nadiad, Shri Navneet Panchal, "We have to send a receipt for 100 rupees to Champakbhai's house, but I can't seem to find the money anywhere."

"I don't know who took the money either," confessed Navneetbhai.

We asked everyone, but no one knew where it had gone.

However, ten days later, I received a letter from a youth, called Suresh, from a village near Vadodara. In it he said, "Last night Pramukh Swami Maharaj appeared before me in a dream and told me, 'You have stolen 100 rupees from God. You've also stolen other amounts of money which the devotees had given to the

sadhus, and you've spent it on your house. But you will never be happy. So return all the money to Janmangal Swami. Otherwise he'll suspect someone else of stealing the money. Then you'll have to bear the sin for that as well. So be sure to return the money.”

This youth, Suresh, had left the letter on Tyagvallabh Swami's desk in Bochasan. He even wrote, “If I had written my address, then you'd catch me, so I've left that space empty.”

From this incident I realized Swamishri's divine intuition to know what is happening, even when he's not present.

ddd

Bochasan. Swamishri was having some fruits at 5:00 pm. I commented, “If Yogiji Maharaj came here right now then you'd have to sit on the floor.”

Swamishri replied, “Yes, if he came here then I'd have to sit on the floor next to you.”

Again, I put it to him, “If Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj came and stayed here permanently, then you'd also have to give up your position as guru!”

Instantly he said, “They're the ones who are sitting on that seat right now! They haven't gone anywhere. Why, do you think they have gone?”

“No,” I replied hastily.

“We should always believe that they are here.”

Within him!

ddd

Many devotees had attended the evening assembly as it was Swamishri's last before leaving the next day for Mumbai - from where he was to embark on another foreign tour. After the assembly, Swamishri stayed to personally meet all the devotees. Usually, a neat and orderly line would be formed, but today the devotees got up all at once, causing chaos. In the midst of all this someone would come up and ask Swamishri, ‘What shall I name my son?’ Another would ask, ‘I want to buy a truck, should I buy

it with a partner or on my own?’ A third would say, ‘Swami, free me from my addiction.’ At the same time he’d also be putting *kanthis* on new devotees.

I was watching all this from behind. I told him, “You’re a very busy man.”

“I don’t have any business. I only do bhajan of Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan constantly. All you people are the busy ones.”

I said, “Your hand must get tired having to put it on 5,000 heads. What if we made a wooden arm which would move up and down on its own?”

At once he said, “We don’t have anything fake about us! We only have the real thing!”

His business is the bhajan of Swaminarayan. And his only possession is God.

ddd

1986. After celebrating the festival of *Kartik Punam* in Bochasan, Swamishri came to Nadiad for two days. Once Viveksagar Swami was discoursing, Swamishri was also in the assembly writing letters. A devotee called Gordhanbhai Jhaverbhai Patel of Narsanda, came up to the edge of the stage and said Jai Swaminarayan to Swamishri. Seeing this elderly devotee standing there Swamishri immediately got up and walked over to him. Swamishri leaned forward as Gordhanbhai began to tell him something. I knew Gordhanbhai very well. Whenever we went to Narsanda, we would always stay at his house. So I began to wonder what he could be telling Swamishri. As I went closer I heard him ask Swamishri, “Bapa! Please come to my house.” Swamishri was explaining to him that, “There’s no time to come at the moment, but the next time I come this way I’ll definitely come to your house.”

I interrupted, “Bapa! It’s not worth going there.” But Swamishri paid no heed to my words. He sent Gordhanbhai away and then he asked me, “Why is it not worth going there?”

I told him, “I remember the last time you went there, you had

a fever and still he made you do 50 *padhramanis*.”

Swamishri then explained, “Do you know how much he supported us in Shastriji Maharaj’s time? No one would even let us set foot in the village. Then he would come and take us to the mandir. He would also send us food from his house. Maybe we won’t be able to go, but we should never say that it’s not worth going there!”

I asked for forgiveness for being so brash. After that Swamishri left to go to Vartal for darshan. Our car was in front, when Swamishri’s car suddenly turned off the main road and took the road to Narsanda.

Gordhanbhai was sitting on the swing outside his house, when all of a sudden Swamishri walked in through the gate! Gordhanbhai was simply overwhelmed. Tears streamed from his eyes as he took Swamishri inside.

After this, Swamishri went to Vartal. Whenever Gordhanbhai remembers this incident, **his eyes naturally well up with tears!**

ddd

1987. One day Swamishri suddenly arrived in Bochasan unannounced. There must have been no more than 50 devotees in the assembly. I said, “This is not right. A God-realized sadhu like you comes here and the hall is so empty.”

“How can you say that it’s empty? There are thousands of *muktas* sitting here. When you walked through here didn’t you ever bump into any? I bumped into so many myself!”

ddd

After celebrating Vasant Panchmi in Atladra, the following day when Swamishri came up for Thakorji’s darshan, I asked him, “Swamishri what did you pray for?”

His answer was touching, “I prayed for all the sadhus to perfect Ekantik Dharma and that they remain in good health. And that the devotees attain happiness, both mentally and in their business. And that I may be able to please them all.”

So I said, “But you have many illnesses yourself, why don’t you

pray for that?"

Swamishri replied, "We can never pray for ourselves. We should be content to live the way Maharaj keeps us."

Could this be the secret behind his ability to tolerate such physical hardships?

xxx

On the eve of Swamishri's 70th birthday celebration in Sarangpur, Amardas Kharavala was giving a performance. Swamishri came into the assembly and sat on a sofa in front of the stage. He was watching the show and doing *mala* at the same time. I approached him and asked, "You seem to be free right now, so is it okay if I ask you some questions?"

"How am I free?" asked Swamishri.

"Well, you're only doing *mala*."

"Obviously you don't seem to think that doing *mala* is an activity. Whereas as far as I am concerned, there is nothing more important than doing *mala*. And whilst doing *mala* talking is forbidden. There's no greater activity than doing bhajan."

This is his priority, his message, his life.

ddd

After the Birth Centenary Celebrations of Yogiji Maharaj, Swamishri was touring in Kheda. Since Swamishri was to perform the *murti-pratishtha* in Chaklasi, he spent the previous night in Nadiad. It was also arranged that Swamishri would unveil a statue of Arvindbhai of Piplag, in a nearby colony. Swamishri had called me on the last day of the festival and said, "I'll be coming in the evening and leaving early the next morning, so don't announce my stay in Nadiad. And arrange for my night halt to be at the home of Harshadbhai, the principle of DDIT College.

As planned, Swamishri arrived in the evening. At the time there were only five sadhus, Harshadbhai and some of his friends sitting opposite Swamishri. So I asked him, "Don't you feel that everything

seems to be empty? In the festival there were hundreds of thousands of people coming everyday. Here there are only five.”

“I always keep God with me,” replied Swamishri, “So I always feel surrounded. Otherwise, without Maharaj, even if the whole world is with you, it would still feel empty!”

Two eternal companions - Maharaj and Swami - in an eternal partnership.



SADHU NARAYANCHARANDAS

1975. Swamishri was in Dasaj village. It was the middle of the summer and his touring was at its peak. His night halt was arranged in two rooms in the village school! Due to the severe heat, he put his bedding outside on the veranda to sleep. We youths put our beddings next to Swamishri's and went to sleep around him. The sadhus were also sleeping out in the open. In the daytime, it would be burning hot while at night, it would be quite cold.

That night a youth called Bipin was sleeping next to Swamishri. It was so cold that in his sleep he pulled Swamishri's blanket and covered himself with it! Swamishri woke up. Even though the blanket was big enough to cover both of them Swamishri let Bipin sleep in it. Meanwhile he spent the whole night with only his *gataryu* for warmth.

In the morning when Bipin realized what he had done, he begged for Swamishri's forgiveness. Swamishri, however, said, "What's there to forgive? You used the blanket, so it served its purpose." Swamishri then laughed off the whole incident. He didn't say a word about how he had to sleep in the cold.

ddd

1977. Swamishri was touring in Sabarkantha district. At that time, Swamishri had two cars with him. He always made sure that they never got too far apart on the road, and that they both arrived at their destination at the same time. Often he would tell the driver to slow down, or even stop if the other car had fallen too far behind.

We were on our way to Motap village when we came to a shallow river. Swamishri's car made it across with ease, but as we reached the opposite bank Swamishri looked back to see if the other car had also made it. However, it appeared to have got stuck. The sadhus got out and began to push. From our car, Swamishri, Dr. Swami, Pragat Bhagat and I got out and went to

see if we could help. Soon, we were all pushing, including Dr. Swami. Then, even Swamishri rolled up his *dhotiyu* and began to heave along with the rest of us. I said, “Swami! There’s no need for you to push.”

Dr. Swami laughed and said, “Let him push it! Only his strength is going to get this car out!”

Swamishri stood up and said, “Look, when I say **Sahajanand Swami Maharaj** *ni Jai-Jai-Jai-* on the third *jai* everybody lift the car a little and push...it’ll come out.”

One sadhu stood on the side to take a break, Swamishri told him, “**C**ome on, get back here!” Then he called the *‘jai’*. We all pushed together and with **a** mighty heave, the car skidded out. Even in such a **tasl** we required oneness - one mind, one goal, coupled with God’s strength - a strategy often employed by Swamishri.



SADHU SHRIRANGDAS

Swamishri became ill soon after returning to Mumbai from his foreign trip. After recovering somewhat, he came to Atladra where Narayan Bhagat (Viveksagar Swami) conducted a three-day Shikshapatri *parayan*. Swamishri would often call us youths who were aspiring to become sadhus. He would talk to us and provide us inspiration. Once, one youth went into Swamishri's room, but no sooner had he done so then Pragat Bhagat said, "Come on. All of you youths get out. It's time for Swamishri to take his nap now."

Swamishri stopped him and said, "Pragat, let them stay. These are all staunch youths. It's all right if they sit here, I'll talk to them..."

As Swamishri was lying on the bed, we began to massage his feet. Swamishri began by asking us, "Do you all take the (Satsang) exams? Make sure that you do. Knowledge of our Satsang gives us inner strength. But if we read other stuff then our mind will become wayward. We have only one guru, one parampara. Remember, there is only one Aksharbrahman. And only he can free us from the bonds of *maya*."

He put his hand on his heart and, making a reference to Vachanamrut Gadhada II-13, he said, "The form in Akshardham and the form here on earth are both the same. There isn't the slightest difference between them."

ddd

14 January 1983. Swamishri was in Khed Brahma. He was staying at the home of Dahyabhai Patel. Just as Swamishri was going to sleep at night, an old devotee from Yogiji Maharaj's time came to see him. His name was Narayanbhai Modi. His ragged appearance reminded us of Dubli Bhatt. His clothes were torn and he was shivering from the cold. From his pocket he took out an envelope containing 300 rupees and put it by Swamishri's feet.

“Please accept my humble donation,” he pleaded.

Swamishri looked at his torn clothes. His eyes **showed** compassion. The reason why Narayanbhai had come at this time of night to give his donation was because **that** morning Swamishri **was away sanctifying** three to four devotees’ homes. Though Narayanbhai’s was on the list, somehow his house had been forgotten.

For the past 33 years Swamishri had never been to his house. Finally his chance had come, and gone. Yet, Narayanbhai didn’t say a word! His only response was to come to Swamishri and give him **his** donation (which he had managed to scrape together with great difficulty), which **otherwise** he would have offered to Swamishri at his house.

Seeing him shivering Swamishri said, “There’s no need for this. You keep it and buy yourself a decent shawl, it’ll come in **handy**.” But Narayanbhai was firm, he refused to take back the money. Seeing this devotee’s love for Swamishri made all of us stand back in awe.

In 1965, the acting Prime Minister of India - Gulzarilal Nanda was out campaigning in Sabarkantha. At that time Yogiji Maharaj had told him, “There is a great devotee who lives in Khed Brahma, his name is Narayanbhai Modi. Make sure you go to his house and have his darshan!”

Nandaji obeyed Yogiji Maharaj’s *agna* and visited Narayanbhai’s house. Such was Narayanbhai’s greatness. And today, he had again won Swamishri’s innermost blessings.

ddd

14 August, 1986. Ahmedabad. It was 10:30 pm and I was sitting alone with Swamishri. During our conversation I asked him, “Bapa, we realize you to be perfect. So according to Vachanamrut Vartal-5 we should be freed from *maya*. Why then, do we still get worldly desires?”

Swamishri replied, “As you have realized the Satpurush to be perfect, then you will definitely become perfect too. And you will be

freed from your base instincts. So keep faith. It doesn't matter if there are still desires within, just keep faith in what Maharaj has told us in Vartal-5, "The one whom we have met is perfect! By the grace of God and his Sadhu, and by discoursing, we too, will become perfect."

After seeing Swamishri's love and compassion, his divinity, his devotion to his **guru**, his spirituality and his tolerance of so many hardships, thinking of all that he has done for us, one feels, "What is there that we cannot do for him?"



SADHU DHARMAPRAKASHDAS

During the winter of 1973, I got a chance to travel with Swamishri for fifteen days in the Kheda district. Everyday we would visit two to three different villages. While in Hodva village, I saw Swamishri have a bath with ice cold water.

From Hodva we went to Traj and from there to Matar. When we arrived, there was no electricity due to a power failure. After the evening assembly, Swamishri returned to his residence. It was so stuffy inside the room and with no fans working, Swamishri went and slept on the roof. A small lantern was burning beside his bed and three of us youths and some sadhus were sitting around him. Ignoring the aches and pains of travelling all day, Swamishri talked to us, giving us inspiration.

ddd

In 1975 during our vacation, I, along with some youths from Vadodara, Jagdish Patel, Vasant Soni, Jitu Soni and some others, had joined Swamishri on his travels. We were all very enthusiastic to do even the smallest *seva*, but often our hastiness led to some terrible accidents.

One afternoon, in Vaso, Swamishri was about to go to sleep. In his room, there was a folding, iron bed. Swamishri lay down on the bed and talked to us for a while before turning on his side to go to sleep. Pragat Bhagat came in and said, “Boys, get the hand fan out, there’s no electricity.” Vasant sat on one side of the bed and began waving his fan, but as the bed was against the wall I couldn’t get next to Swamishri. So Swamishri said, “Move the bed to the centre of the room, so he can sit down.”

Vasant and I jumped up and got on either side of the bed. As we tried to move it, the end at which Swamishri’s head was, was lifted too early. The weight of this made the legs at the other end of the bed collapse. There was a loud crash as one end of the

bed fell. Swamishri fell with the bed. He sat there, **unruffled**. The other sadhus rushed in and saw Swamishri still lying on the bed. We were all relieved that he wasn't hurt. Calmly Swamishri said, "Everything's all right. Now put everything back as it was."

This time we worked more carefully. And as soon as the windows were shut, he was sound asleep.



GLOSSARY

A

agna	instruction, order, command
Aksharbrahman	one of the five eternal realities; manifest form of the abode of Bhagwan Swaminarayan
akshar-mukta	a <i>jiva</i> that has attained ultimate liberation and resides forever in Akshardham with a divine body
arti	hindu ritual of waving lighted wicks before the <i>murti</i> of God as an act of worship

B

brahmaswarup	‘form of Brahman’
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C

cheshta	verses sung at night describing the daily routine and glory of Shriji Maharaj
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D

datan	a variety of small thick twigs used to clean one’s teeth in the morning, usually of <i>acacia arabica</i> - baval tree.
dhanurmas	month, starting on 16 December, during which the deities symbolically attend shool
Dharmakul	the family of Dharma
dhotiyu	lower garment worn by men

E

ekadashi	special religious observance of fasting performed on the 11th day of the bright and dark halves of each lunar month
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G

garud	the eagle vehicle of Lord Vishnu
gataryu	upper garment worn by a sadhu or <i>parshad</i>
gnan	spiritual knowledge leading to enlightenment, in particular, the knowledge of one's <i>atma</i> and the form and greatness of Paramatma
guru	spiritual preceptor

J

jai	call of victory
jamrukh	guava
Janmashtmi	birthday of Shri Krishna on Shravan <i>vad</i> 8. Celebrated annually by Vaishnavs with festivals of devotional worship
jav	barley

K

kanthi	necklace of sacred beads
katha	spiritual discourse
khakhra	toasted chapatti
kothari	head of a mandir

M

mahant	head priest of a mandir
mala	rosary
maya	ignorance
mohanthal	a sweet delicacy
mukta	liberated soul
murti	sacred idol of God that is revered and worshipped
murti-pratishtha	consecration of <i>murtis</i> of God in a mandir

N

nirjala	waterless fast
niyam	second step of <i>ashtang yoga</i> entailing observance of religious practices and code of dharma for the control and refinement of the mind

P

padhramani	visit by sadhus to sanctify a home
panchtirthi	pilgrimage
papad	thin crisp cake made of flour mixed with spices, eaten fried or roasted
parampara	lineage, usually of spiritual gurus.
parayan	spiritual discourses held for several days
parshad	renunciant wearing white robes.
patotsav	anniversary celebration of mandir murti-pratishtha ceremony.
pattar	wooden bowl for eating.
pistapak	a sweet delicacy made of pistachio nuts
potlu	a piece of cloth used as a bag.
pranayam	yogic breathing exercises. (Pr. Praanaayaam)
prasad	consecrated food
pujari	priest who performs daily rituals of the murtis

R

rotlo	a basic unleavened bread-like staple food of many parts of Gujarat, made generally of millet flour that is kneaded and patted into a flat, circular shape before being cooked on an earthen or metal hot plate
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S

sadguru	a high ranking sadhu, also a realized sadhu
satsang	good company; spiritual association
satsangi	one who practices satsang
seva	service
sevak	one who serves
shiro	a sweet delicacy, usually of wheat flour, ghee, sugar and condiments
swarup	form

T

thal	food devotionally offered to God as a form of bhakti, which in turn consecrates the food- turning it into prasad
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U

upasana	worship of God, with special emphasis on his greatness and glory
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V

vairagya	detachment; an aversion or strong, persistent dislike for the world and its pleasures
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Y

yagna	ceremonial ritual performed as a form of worship to seek the good favour and receive the blessings of the deities
yogasan	yogic postures
yuvak	youth

